

THE CLOUD THAT LIFTED
AND
THE POWER OF THE DEAD



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THE CLOUD THAT LIFTED
AND
THE POWER OF THE DEAD

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THE CLOUD THAT LIFTED

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AXEL THORILD

TORMASSOV

SONIA BIELENSKY

TATIANA

A SERVANT

The time is the present day, in Finland,
near Helsingfors.

ACT I

A reception-room in SONIA BIELENSKY'S house. At the back there are two French-windows opening on the garden, on the left a door leading into the antechamber, on the right a door leading into another drawing-room. The time is evening, with a moon lighting up the garden.

ACT I

SCENE I

[TORMASSOV; TATIANA.]

TORMASSOV

For the last four days I have brought together every hint, every little piece of information, listened to every rumour, questioned everybody that might have had the least connection with what has happened, near or remote. The results are not decisive so far, but . . . patience! It is n't humanly possibly that a crime of this kind should vanish into thin air and fade away without leaving some traces. . . . I have unravelled darker puzzles, and I never set about any of

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them with as much keenness as this one. . . . It would be extraordinary if I could n't manage what I've done for unknown victims—and sometimes they were n't even of any particular interest—now that it's a question of my very oldest friend. . . . For Bielensky and I, as he must often have told you himself, were boys together; we were linked one to the other, and in a way one through the other, to a fuller and more active past, the very memory of which is fading in these days of overmuch indulgence. We see plainly to-day the abysses to which toleration is dragging us. . . . And the worst is still to come. . . . But let us talk of something else. . . . Where is our poor Sonia? . . . Wretched as her unfortunate father's death is for me, my loss is nothing compared with hers. . . . How is she? . . . Is she a little

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calmer? . . . What does the doctor say? . . .

TATIANA

She is in her own room. . . . Last night she was a little delirious, but she is asleep now. . . . Since the funeral there has been a kind of relief and reaction. But you know how strong and how brave she is. . . . One single idea rises above her distress and casts a ray of light through it; she is determined to find the assassin and make him pay the penalty.

TORMASSOV

That depends entirely on you; our whole hope rests on you alone. . . .

TATIANA

Alas! I know nothing beyond what I have told you already.

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TORMASSOV

And that is of the greatest importance to begin with. You are still convinced that it was an assassination, an ambush? . . .

TATIANA

I have never had the slightest doubt about it.

TORMASSOV

Still . . . your first impressions, your earliest statements were not so definite.

TATIANA

I was so overwhelmed! . . . I, who had never seen death, that I should see it there all at once, at my feet, in such a guise! . . . In those first moments you are fumbling, puzzling things over, you do not know what you are saying. . . .

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TORMASSOV

I know, my poor girl. . . . That is why I did not insist. But now that five days have gone by since these first violent emotions, I would be glad to have a more precise statement, to fix once for all just what you do know. . . . I beg you to forgive me for awakening such memories, but it is really absolutely essential. . . . This is a sacrifice I can well claim from your twofold affection for Sonia and for her father who is gone from us. . . . You are our main witness, indeed our only witness, and this is the first time we have been able to talk of these things with the coolness they demand. . . . Try to recall every single one of the details. . . . It often happens that what appears to be least important suddenly becomes the most valuable of all.

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TATIANA

I don't see that there is very much to add to what I've told you already. . . . As you know, it was on Friday evening. . . . Sonia was away. . . . After dinner I had gone down with her father into the garden. . . . We were strolling in the little alley that goes through the thicket of aspens. . . . it was very dark in it. . . . All at once we heard a sound of steps, a rustle of branches brushed aside, and it seems to me—for I am not certain and it might have been nothing more than the cry of an awakened bird—a whistle. . . . Sonia's father quivered—I must tell you that the night before, and that very morning, he had received letters filled with precise and detailed threats—he pulled out the big revolver he always carried after the two attempts on his life

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last month, and whispered to me, "Don't move; this time I've got the fellow"—and disappeared into the shadows. . . . A few seconds after, I heard a shot, then two more, and finally three successive reports, followed by a cry of distress. . . . I run towards the cry, and nearer than I imagined, in a gleam from the moon, clear of clouds a moment, I see Sonia's father stretched on the ground and just before him, against a wall, the man who had fired, still with his revolver smoking in his hand.

TORMASSOV

And then?

TATIANA

Then the moon was covered over again, and it grew completely black under the trees; I could distinguish nothing more,

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and the man disappeared. . . . I don't
know how—

TORMASSOV

What sort of man was it?

TATIANA

It's very hard to describe. . . .

TORMASSOV

You had never seen him before?

TATIANA

Never.

TORMASSOV

A young man.

TATIANA

Yes.

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TORMASSOV

Of what social standing? Rich or poor?
A workman, a peasant? . . .

TATIANA

No, of the leisured class.

TORMASSOV

Fair, brown, a beard, no beard?
What—

TATIANA

Ah, when it comes to a definite description it becomes very difficult. . . . I am certain that I could easily recognize him in a crowd; and still I feel I could never manage to describe him. . . .

TORMASSOV

Well, let us leave that for the moment.
. . . Who do you think fired the first shot?

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TATIANA

The murderer.

TORMASSOV

What makes you think so? . . .

TATIANA

I'm quite certain of it. . . .

TORMASSOV

We have to make absolutely certain of this point; it is of the utmost importance. . . . Let us see. . . . Can you remember if the sound, the strength, the volume of the six shots were exactly alike?

TATIANA

Yes. . . . Perhaps. . . . Very nearly.

TORMASSOV

I know that such barbarous things are not what girls dream of and ponder.

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But I will help you. . . . Let's see . . . the revolver Bielensky used, which has been handed over to me, is a service revolver, a heavy-calibre Nagant, of a model that is seldom found in ordinary trade. . . . It is probable, therefore, or nearly certain, that the report it makes must be louder and more violent than that of the murderer's weapon, and so? . . .

TATIANA

Indeed, now I remember. . . . The first shot was a light one, then three more violent, then three not so loud. . . .

TORMASSOV

Just what I expected. . . . The first shot is fired by the murderer. . . . Bielensky replies with the three more violent reports; and that corresponds with the

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three empty shells found in the chamber of his pistol. . . . That is what we had to prove. The fact is incontestable, and proves beyond dispute that there was an ambush and a premeditated attack. We have a murderer to deal with. . . . And then, to come back to facts, you found the victim lying on the ground? . . .

TATIANA

Yes, across the alley, and not far from the outside wall of the garden. . . . I stooped over him . . . he was in the death-rattle. . . . I raised his head and held it as well as I could. . . . I called out for help, and at last somebody ran up to us. . . .

TORMASSOV

He never spoke?

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TATIANA

He never said another word. . . .
They carried him to his bed, and he was
hardly laid on it before he died without
regaining consciousness. . . . The bullet,
as you know, had gone through the nape
of the neck and touched the spinal
cord. . . .

TORMASSOV

The whistle you mentioned just now,
was that a signal? . . . Do you think the
murderer was not alone? . . .

TATIANA

I had a very clear impression of the
flight of several men running in different
directions. . . .

TORMASSOV

Were the garden gates shut?

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TATIANA

The walls are easy to climb. . . .

TORMASSOV

To what extent was he alarmed by the threatening letters he was continually receiving? . . . He never spoke to me about them. . . .

TATIANA

Since the two attempts on his life last month he was always on his guard, suspicious, distrustful, nervous, anxious, but he never spoke of his fears. . . . All the same, I remember once, two days before the murder, while we were talking quietly at night in the drawing-room, he got up quickly and went to the window, exclaiming, "There 's somebody prowling about the house." He wanted to go out, to hunt about. . . . We kept him back,

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thinking it was just nerves that alarmed him, or made him angry, rather, for it roused more anger in him than fear.

TORMASSOV

That was the unlucky thing about it! . . . When anything vexed or thwarted him he would always hurl himself at it like a wild bull. But all this supposes a long expected, coolly planned attempt against him. . . . I had warned him. . . . He had rather a heavy hand lately, and would n't believe in the reawakening of the Scandinavian movement, terrorist or nihilist movement if you like; the name does n't matter a bit, for the three things are one and the same, and it is simply the forces from underneath that are rising up against order. . . . And then in spite of all my advice he went obstinately on living in this old isolated, lonely, dangerous

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house. But since a crime has actually been committed I am glad it should be a political one. For political crimes, being more affairs of intelligence than other kinds, leave more strongly marked traces, and betray themselves just so much the more easily the more ingeniously planned they are. . . . Anyhow, I have already more than one starting-point, and I think I have found a line of scent. . . .

TATIANA

Really?

TORMASSOV .

What's that noise at the garden window? . . . Did you hear? . . .

TATIANA

At the third window? . . . Oh, yes, I

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know. . . . That is the branch of a tree that taps on the pane. . . . It has given us a shiver more than once already. . . .

TORMASSOV

There is no wind.

TATIANA

There is always a certain amount of a breeze blowing at this corner of the house giving on the valley.

TORMASSOV

Yes, I am following up a scent. . . . I'm looking for a man who saw the murderer running away—or one of his accomplices, at any rate. A man who knows him—recognized him . . . and it seems has spoken about it without being willing to give the name. . . . This man has dis-

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appeared . . . is hiding most likely, but I think I am close on his track. . . . Another person, for whom I am searching also, spoke of some one he had seen prowling round the park on several days together, before the murder. . . . All this will link up and come together and be made clear. . . . Soon I shall manage to lay my hand on the people suspected . . . to bring them to you, to set them face to face with you . . . and you will decide the matter finally; for there was no one but you who saw, in any way that can be called seeing. . . . So that you are the great judge, the only judge. . . . In the mean time I have something stronger than mere hope, and I was counting on telling our poor dear Sonia this latest good news; but since she is still asleep I will come back later. . . . There is nothing, I know there is nothing that

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can lighten her grief and distress except the prompt and justly merited punishment of the murderer.

TATIANA

She thinks of nothing else now. . . . I don't know her now when she speaks about it . . . so gentle as she always is, so indulgent, so forgiving and kind, she has suddenly become implacable, and only lives to avenge her father. . . .

TORMASSOV

She is right. . . . We must make an example. . . . Good-bye. . . . Tell her . . . no, don't say anything beforehand. I'll come back this evening, and I'll tell her myself. . . . Don't show me out; I know the old house.

[He goes out on the left. When

TATIANA is quite certain he is

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gone, she goes and opens one of the French windows in the background. Enter AXEL very circumspectly.]

SCENE II

[AXEL; TATIANA.]

AXEL

You are alone? . . .

TATIANA

Yes.

AXEL

Where is Sonia? . . .

TATIANA

Asleep.

AXEL

How is she? . . .

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TATIANA

Not very well.

AXEL

What? . . . Not well? . . . Tell me. . . .

TATIANA

Don't be disturbed; the danger is over. . . . Her nerves are greatly shaken, and the doctor was afraid, and is afraid even now, of something wrong with the brain if any new emotions come to give her a fresh shock. . . . She is asleep . . . the first moment of relaxation and rest she has had for five days.

AXEL

Who was that with you?

TATIANA

Tormassov, who is in charge of the in-

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quity. . . . We will have to arrange some other signal. . . . He noticed the tapping of the branch on the pane. . . . In any case it is n't possible now for you to come here again. . . . The garden is watched by Tormassov's detectives. . . . I don't even understand how you managed to get into it now without being seen, and you will have to take extraordinary precautions to get out again. . . .

AXEL

All right, we'll see. . . . I must see Sonia.

TATIANA

You shall see her . . . she will call me as soon as she is awake.

AXEL

I can't stand it any longer. . . . I

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have made up my mind. . . . I can't stand it, and it is impossible for me to go on hiding the truth from her. . . . As long as her father's body was here, actually in the house . . . yes . . . there was an excuse, a pretext for silence. . . . And, besides, I was only able to come to her for a moment, and in secret, in the midst of such an agony of despair that every word that might have been said would have been strangled in tears. But now I neither can nor will. . . . When I think that in a moment she will open that door, and that her first movement will be to throw herself into my arms . . . and I . . . No! No . . . it has gone on long enough.

TATIANA

If it means your dealing her this blow, you shall not see her.

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AXEL

I shall be the judge of that.

TATIANA

You shall not see her until you swear to say nothing to her to-day. . . . I don't ask you to keep the truth hidden from her, but just not to reveal it to her until she is strong enough to hear it.

AXEL

A man and a woman have different ideas as to duty and honesty, and I will not take my cue from a woman.

TATIANA

I know . . . a man, just to be rid of a secret that burdens him, to be able to draw untroubled breath, a man is ready to sacrifice the very life of the thing he loves.

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AXEL

But just think. . . . I am becoming . . . I am beyond forgiveness; I have no excuse now; I would not deserve to be called a man if I take a single kiss from her before telling her of the dreadful thing that lies between us! . . . I have delayed only too long already! . . . I ought to have cried out the unimaginable truth to her on the night itself! . . . I have no more than just enough strength left to reveal it to her, to go away, to lose all, to disappear and make an end!

TATIANA

It is n't yourself and your position you should be thinking of, but hers. . . . Anyhow, it is quite a simple matter; it depends on me whether you see her or not, and you shall not see her until I have your pledged word.

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AXEL

Where have you got this determination from, Tatiana; I don't recognize you at all.

TATIANA

I am defending what I love. I am defending the girl who received me in a way no sister in the world could have done . . . who consoled me, encouraged me, brought me back to life from the depths of an unfathomable, unescapable distress . . . to whom I owe everything, even the energy with which I am fighting against you so as to spare her a trial that would kill her. . . .

AXEL

Very well, then, I shall not speak to-day.

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TATIANA

[Holding out her hand to him.]

Thanks; now you prove to me that you know how to love her as she deserves to be loved.

AXEL

In exchange, I insist on something.

TATIANA

What? . . .

AXEL

That you say nothing to her, either; that you must make no allusion and no insinuation under pretext of preparing her mind. . . . She must be told by my mouth, and by no other.

TATIANA

That is clearly understood. . . . And

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yet before coming to that, I want to tell you everything that is in my mind. . . . We have been friends for a long, long time, Axel. . . . It is nearly three years now, I think, since we first met each other; it was I who brought you and made you know the woman you were to love. . . . Sometimes it seems to me as if I were the elder sister and guardian of that love which I have seen spring up under my eyes. . . . It seems to me that I am the more bound to watch over its happiness since it was not without a pang that I saw it grow and flourish. . . . I can say it to you now, since it is a thing of the past, and passed away. . . . I loved you, Axel, or at least I thought I loved you. . . . As you were in love with our dear Sonia, you never suspected this love of mine that never said a word.

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AXEL

Tatiana!

TATIANA

Do not pity me; my love is not dead.
. . . It has changed its shape, and has
bent itself wholly on your happiness, the
happiness of you both. . . . My part
seems a little sad, but it has its smiling
moments; and you could never imagine
how sweet it is to be in love with the
happiness of those we love, even while
that happiness, the more it increases, re-
moves them the further from us. . . .

AXEL

My dear, kind Tatiana! . . .

TATIANA

Let us say no more of these things, which
are of so little significance at this mo-

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ment. . . . This is what I wanted to say to you. . . . It is very difficult, but perhaps you will understand me in a moment.

AXEL

Tell me. . . .

TATIANA

You have made up your mind to destroy, and you are on the point of poisoning in its very well springs the most beautiful, the deepest, the most perfect love that any one could ever find. . . . And for what? Merely to obey a first inevitable and instinctive impulse of selfishness, to relieve yourself of a scruple and an anxious thought that you ought to have courage enough to bear singly by yourself till the end of your life.

AXEL

Speak more clearly. . . .

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TATIANA

You have killed Sonia's father, by a mere accident, without knowing it, without intending it; but this death, in all justice and in all conscience, was as far remote from you as if it had come from the fall of a tree or of a rock. You would not blame yourself had you seen the tree fall or the rock crash down; no more should you accuse yourself because a bullet, unintended and astray, struck the person you could not discern in the darkness, and whose mere presence you could not even have suspected. . . . For I was there, remember. . . . I know what I know. . . . I saw what I saw, and I tell myself that in your place I would not say a word, and that I would be strong enough to keep locked away in my own heart that dreadful blunder of chance and the night.

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AXEL

Tatiana!

TATIANA

Axel? . . .

AXEL

You belong to another race, and that is why I summon up my patience and try to tell myself that you cannot understand. But this must be the last time you say such things to me. . . .

TATIANA

Why? . . .

AXEL

Because I should take such steps as would prevent you from seeing Sonia ever again. . . . Now let us talk of something else. . . . Tormassov has just gone from here; what does he know?

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TATIANA

Nothing definite. . . . He is hunting for a man who saw the murderer, as they call him, running away, and who it appears has talked about it without being willing to give the name. This man has disappeared, and it is believed that he is hiding. Did you meet with any one in your flight?

AXEL

When I had climbed the wall, I do believe I was seen by some one passing by, some one I do not know, and who, I am quite sure, does not know me either. . . .

TATIANA

Another person whom he is also looking for spoke of an individual that had been seen more than once prowling around the park. . . .

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AXEL

I take such careful precautions that I have no fears on that score. . . . So, then, there is very little. . . . Did he question you again? . . .

TATIANA

Yes.

AXEL

What did you say to him?

TATIANA

I repeated what I had said at the first questioning, and laid more stress on the idea of an ambush and a political crime, so as to throw him off the scent.

AXEL

That is rather dangerous.

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TATIANA

No, it's all too vague. . . . I made no clear statement except that I had seen right in front of me, in full light, the man who fired the fatal shot; so that in case of need, if the search should light on you, I should be able to fail to recognize you. . . .

AXEL

He has no suspicion?

TATIANA

About you? . . . All the time you have been coming here secretly into this lonely and deserted garden, nobody, not even a servant, has ever suspected your presence. As for Tormassov, he does n't even know of your existence!

AXEL

Sonia's father never spoke to him about me, then?

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TATIANA

Sonia's father hardly knew you at all. . . . He had driven you away, once for all, in an explosion of wrath; he never admitted the possibility of any resistance to his will; and so he imagined he had abolished you, and he was too proud and too taciturn ever to speak about it to any one, not even to his oldest friend.

AXEL

And then, in any case, it does n't matter; my judge is Sonia. . . . She will welcome me or send me away; and if she sends me away, I will go and give myself up. . . . Under the dictator's régime we are now enjoying it means execution within twenty-four hours, and that is all I ask. . . .

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TATIANA

I think I've heard her walking about in her room for some minutes already. . . . [*Listening.*] She has got up. . . . [*Opening the door on the right.*] She is coming down the stairs. . . . Above everything, be careful, and remember your promise.

[*She goes out to meet SONIA, and the next moment comes back with her.*]

SCENE III

[SONIA; TATIANA; AXEL.]

SONIA

[Pale with her eyes wide and shining, feverish and shivering.] Axel! *[To Tatiana in a reproachful tone, while she throws herself into AXEL'S arms.]* And you never let me know! . . .

TATIANA

You were asleep . . . the doctor had forbidden you to be awakened on any pretext whatever. . . .

SONIA

How stupid you all are, everybody that

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is n't in love! What sleep could be half as good as the presence of the one I find once more and embrace at last! [*To AXEL.*] Have you been here long? . . .

AXEL

No, Tatiana was telling—

SONIA

It is really you, your hands and your very arms, your eyes, your real self come back to me again once more! . . .

AXEL

[*Noticing that she grows pale and totters.*] Sonia! What is the matter?

SONIA

Nothing . . . nothing . . . sometimes I have a passing touch of faintness. . . . Ah! I no longer believed it, and I be-

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lieved in nothing any more. . . . I could n't imagine your existence and your presence. . . . Where were you? What were you doing? . . . Why did I not see you any more? . . .

AXEL

They told me it was impossible. . . .

SONIA

Who told you that? . . . Why? . . . Because I was weeping? . . . But that was just the time. . . . Ah, yes! I know . . . ah! always to be hiding . . . to meet like wrong-doers, all because of the hate that fed and fostered this crime. Ah, I am tired of it all! . . . disgusted, sickened! . . . Now it's all over . . . there will be no more struggles, no more parties, no more country, no more intrigues. . . . I will have no more of all

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these about me. . . . I won't have them, I tell you! . . . Ah! I have paid my share, and I have paid yours, too! . . . Now it is enough; do you not think it is enough, Axel? . . . Yes, and to prove it you shall take up my duty, my appointed task. Oh, without betraying your own folk! . . . But this unparalled stroke at last gives us the right to think only of ourselves . . . the old duties are dead and gone; there remains only one and you can take it up, for beyond the others it is a duty of simple justice, which even the bitterest enemies may join in loving! . . . I have never hated before, but this time I hate! . . . and you hate with me! Tell me you do; you must, for I need you, and I need to be helped.

AXEL

Sonia! . . .

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SONIA

Yes! Yes! Yes! . . . one might think you do not feel it as yet. I can understand that you have not pondered day and night as I have . . . you will see . . . but to be able to love we must know how to hate. Imagine the man that committed this outrage going away quietly and peacefully, free and proud through life, as though it was nothing! . . . Ah, no, no! . . . I am in his path, and you will be in his path, too! . . . If others forget him, we will never forget. . . . We will seek and search everywhere, for years if need be, but we will find the track. . . . I am all for men avenging their wrongs. . . . Yes, we can forgive when it is ourselves . . . though there is too much forgiving in the world . . . but

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the wrong done to those we love—not that, never! . . .

AXEL

Sonia, calm yourself . . . you are growing terribly excited; you are beside yourself; and you are doing yourself harm.

SONIA

I am not excited; I am easing my grief, relieving my hate. . . . This is the first time I have been allowed to speak. I have been choking, stifling, do you hear? . . . You know what there is to know? . . .

AXEL

Tatania has told me.

SONIA

It was never one of your people that

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could have done it. That is impossible; I am certain of it! . . . It is too ugly, too cowardly! . . . What do you think? . . .

AXEL

I think with you that none of my people . . . but there are others. . . .

SONIA

No! . . . no! . . . I was sure of it. . . . And, then, you have told me twenty times over that neither you nor your people ever employed such means to pull down an enemy. . . . No, no, the people who are near you could never do that. . . . There is no shadow of doubt, it was an ambush and an assassination.

AXEL

That is not proved. . . . It might also

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have been by chance, perhaps some mistake. . . .

SONIA

A mistake! . . . a chance! . . . what a pure chance it must be that brings the traitor sneaking like that into the victim's garden! . . . and the bullet in the neck and the gang in their places!

AXEL

A gang in their places? . . . There was never any question of—

SONIA

Ask Tatiana. . . . Is n't that so? you are sure there were five or six.

TATIANA

Five or six, I don't know. . . . I'm not sure about anything, since I could see nothing.

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SONIA

No, but anyhow you believe—

TATIANA

I did get the impression that in fact several persons—

SONIA

[*To AXEL.*] But you, what have you heard? . . . Tatiana told me you were searching eagerly and that you already had found a scent.

AXEL

I did n't say that . . . I am still only dealing with the vaguest hints and signs.

SONIA

No matter, what are they? . . . You must neglect nothing. . . . You have a better chance than Tormassov or any one

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else to discover the truth. . . . Everybody speaks freely before you . . . no one has any mistrust. . . . Let us see now. . . . What motive? . . . Is it a political crime? . . . But no, that you would know. . . . And it was not for robbery . . . so then it was for revenge . . . a personal revenge. . . . Come, what do you know about it? . . . Why do you say nothing? . . .

AXEL

I will tell you what I know when I have anything certain. . . .

SONIA

But no . . . do not let us fold our arms and wait for certainties. . . . They never come in that way; that is how they escape us. . . . Let us take everything that offers . . . that is real certainty!

The Cloud That Lifted

Why these reticences? . . . Do you not venture to speak before Tatiana? . . . My dearest Tatiana! See her clear, fresh face! She was my one only refuge in these days of weeping, and she talked to me about you. [*To TATIANA.*] But indeed and indeed, I understand, he would rather see me alone. You must know that in spite of everything you are a third person, and he does not know yet that we are but one heart, you and I.

[*TATIANA goes out. SONIA staggers to the divan and sinks down on it. AXEL runs to her and holds her in his arms.*]

SCENE IV

[AXEL; SONIA.]

AXEL

Sonia! . . . you are all pale . . .
your hands are burning and trembling.
. . . Come into my arms, my poor dar-
ling Sonia. . . . You are altogether
worn out, and indeed you are wrong to
be so excited. . . . Tatiana tells me the
doctor is uneasy and insists that you are
to rest and not to think about . . .

SONIA

It's nothing. . . . I am better . . .
it is just a little fatigue and the remains of
my fever. . . . It's my nerves recovering

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from the strain. But there now . . . I am born again. . . . The best rest is in your arms; that was what I was waiting for, and that is my one cure. . . . Ah, I needed them as one might need shade on a burning desert. . . . I need your calm and your steadfast loyalty, and your mere presence has brought me back to life, already. . . . I was calling, calling you without ceasing, and you never came at all. . . .

AXEL

But indeed I did; I came at the very first moment; only you seemed not to see me or hear me. . . .

SONIA

At the first moment. . . . Ah! I no longer knew who came or who went. . . . For an instant I thought really that my

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reason was oozing away from every part of my body. I no longer dared to speak, to listen, to look. I felt that my life, that my whole being no longer held to anything. But you cannot understand, you could never understand the wrong, the injury that I have suffered, and what I have lost. . . . He was not a father like other fathers: a simple, kind old man, indulgent, attentive. . . .

AXEL

Come, my darling Sonia, you are tiring yourself still more, instead of resting quietly, quietly in my arms. . . . Let us have done with these memories that kindle your anguish afresh.

SONIA

No, no, they soothe it, they calm it. . . . I must speak of it, and all I say of

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it helps to bring me back to peace. . . .
You did not know him. . . . You never
saw him except that once when he was
angry. . . . But you would have loved
him. . . . He looked forbidding and ter-
rifying to any one that did n't know. . . .
People thought he was reserved, pas-
sionate, tyrannical; they could see his sud-
den violent fits of rage. . . . His rage
was often blind, it is quite true . . . but it
was his strength seeking some outlet, and
it was all quickly forgotten in such kindly
regrets. . . . They said his ideas were
narrow and obstinate and out of date, but
what of that? . . . He thought he was
serving his master and Holy Russia. . . .
And after all it was a great idea, that
idea, too. . . . I never approved it, but
I admired his faithfulness. . . . You, you
serve another idea, and I do not judge

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you. . . . But why should men hate one another because they follow two paths that are not the same? . . . But you would have loved him, and he would have loved you. . . . And he understood everything, he lit up everything, he soared above everything he did. . . . I adored you in him. . . . I love him still in you. . . . If my arms clasp you like this, in spite of my grief, if I can give you kisses through my tears, it is because his memory—

AXEL

No . . . no . . .

SONIA

What! . . . You push me away! . . .
What is it? . . .

AXEL

I am not pushing you away, but I want

The Cloud That Lifted

to change the course of these thoughts
that give you so much pain. . . .

SONIA

But no, they are doing me good. . . .
So you don't understand that they are
necessary to me, and that I would stifle if
they did not pour out of my bursting
heart. . . . It is by thinking of all he
was to me that I imagine myself once
more in possession of what I have lost.
. . . . I drew from him even in my very
childhood as one might draw from a spring
that is always full and never ruffled or tur-
bid. . . . He was never a mere father. . . .
A father! an easy word to say . . . and
yet the word means nothing unless it means
everything. . . . He was my friend, my
brother in every game, in every smile, the
sage of every day and every thought.

The Cloud That Lifted

. . . Ah! if you had known. . . . How strange it is that some one has to be dead for us to see him at last in all his true reality! . . . He thought he hated you and wished you ill, and he thought, too, that you detested him. . . . That makes you smile. . . .

AXEL

No. . . .

SONIA

You have forgiven him? . . .

AXEL

Yes. . . .

SONIA

He was so whole-heartedly inflexible; when I spoke of you to him, he went into a wild rage! He said that never should

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the worst enemy of the Czar, one of the heads of the band that is keeping Finland in turmoil . . . he said that rather than give his daughter to one of the brigands who . . . well, I don't know what he said. . . . And on my side I was amused; I felt so sure in reality, and I smiled at him and I smiled at you. . . . A few more days, I said to my own self, a few weeks longer, and they will come together, they will get to know each other and they will adore each other. . . . I was in no impatient hurry; I was not uneasy; it was inevitably certain. You were bound to love each other, since I loved you both. . . . If he had been your father you could not have been more like him in everything he was to those who knew his heart and his ideas. . . . When I see you there, and the more I look at you. . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

Look me in the face. . . . Why do you drop your eyes? . . . One might say that you bear him a grudge still.

AXEL

No, but I think if I had known him better this dreadful thing might possibly never have happened!

SONIA

Why? . . .

AXEL

I don't know. . . . One never knows. . . . Often the smallest movement, the slightest chance alters a whole destiny.

SONIA

Perhaps, yes, who knows? . . . He would have been there, between us two, to-day or to-morrow. . . . His smile will

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always be something lacking to my happiness. . . . A father's smile upon his daughter's love is a powerful charm against fear or mischance. . . . I am looking at you again. . . . Like you, he had so clear, so transparent a face that the smallest thought held back and not disclosed filled it with anguish and reproach. In him I could see everything, just as I could see in you if you ever wished to hide anything from me. . . . And to think that all this—by one single stupid blow . . . without excuse, without reason . . . I am not a cruel woman . . . I have found forgiveness for everything . . . but not for this, never, never! . . . I would shatter the branch, I would grind the stone to powder that had stricken him by chance; whatever was the motive, whoever was the doer of the deed nothing can

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ever excuse it. . . . We will find him.
. . . I dedicate my life to the task; you
will help me, will you not? You will
throw into it all your ardour, your
strength, your courage; you will give up
everything else, think of nothing but him;
and our sweetest kisses will unite in the
love that seeks for justice.

[*Enter* TATIANA.]

SCENE V

[AXEL; SONIA; TATIANA.]

TATIANA

Tormassov is coming back . . . he is crossing the park. [*To AXEL.*] Go and hide.

SONIA

Why? . . . There is nothing to conceal now. . . . What other people think is nothing to us here any more. . . . I will introduce Axel to him.

TATIANA

No, no, not to-day. . . . Believe me, it will be better not. . . . There are rea-

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sons . . . you shall hear them later. . . .
Is n't that so, Axel? . . . I hear him
coming. . . .

AXEL

I will wait out in the park. . . .

TATIANA

No, don't trust the park. . . . Here
. . . here.

*[She makes AXEL go out by the door
on the right, and goes with him,
coming back towards the end of
the scene between TORMASSOV and
SONIA. Enter TORMASSOV by the
door on the left.]*

SCENE VI

[TORMASSOV; SONIA; *then* TATIANA.]

TORMASSOV

[*Entering.*] So there you are, up and about, Sonia? . . . How are you? I have good news, great news.

SONIA

What is it?

TORMASSOV

If it is true, and I think it is, that an invisible power brings the murderer back to the scene of his crime, ours is taken.

SONIA

No? . . . How? . . . Where is he?

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TORMASSOV

Here, most likely. . . . The man has been seen prowling among the shubberies in the avenue and then climbing the wall of the garden. . . . I have had the park surrounded. . . . He is taken in the net. . . . Now we have to put our hand on his person. . . . We are going to beat the grounds systematically for him. . . . I have my men.

SONIA

I will be your guide.

[*They go out.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

The same scene. Next morning.

ACT II

SCENE I

[SONIA; TATIANA.]

TATIANA

[*Comes up to SONIA, places herself on the edge of the arm-chair in which the latter is sitting, and puts her arm tenderly about her neck.*] You seem very quiet and calm this morning, my big Sonia; your cheeks are getting back their beautiful clear colour. What a nice thing you are to kiss like this!

SONIA

[*Kissing her in turn.*] You too, you

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are nice . . . it is like drinking the dew of the morning . . . all crystal, azure, rosy, dewy, dawn-like. . . . Yes, I feel myself stronger and almost rested in spite of the emotions of last night. . . . I slept like a good little child, and I almost reproach myself a little for that, for indeed nature and life, if we let them, would be in such dreadful haste to forget our most tragical despairs. . . .

TATIANA

I was so afraid that last night's alarm and that fruitless pursuit in the park, these fresh emotions just as you were recovering from your fever attack, might have made us lose all that five days of healing tears had done to overcome your anguish. . . . I love you so tenderly and so deeply, my big Sonia. . . . I owe you so many, many things; and I know so well

The Cloud That Lifted

that I shall never have anything to give you but my kisses, the kisses of a harmless little sister. . . .

SONIA

A little sister who has saved me from the shadows. . . . You have been so good, so devoted through these long black days when I would have been lost without one gleam of light if you had not been there.

TATIANA

You know the doctor was very uneasy about you last night. . . . He was afraid of . . . what is it? . . . a brain fever . . . and then I don't know what all—I've forgotten the name. . . . And our good Tormassov was in despair when he heard how stupid he had been and how dangerous it was to subject you to any

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great excitement. . . . I had n't been able to warn him. . . . He was so happy over his good news; he thought he had the guilty person in his hands, and his zeal is so immense. . . .

SONIA

Yes, his zeal touches me. . . . He adored my father. . . . But I think he is full of very simple-minded illusions. . . . He has remained faithful to ancient methods that suppose a murderer must needs come and parade about the scene of his crime every night. . . . We are no longer at that point. . . . We are dealing here with something far more advanced. . . . Axel and myself, we shall have to come to his help, or else our enemy will be at large for a long time yet. . . . But I have no fears. . . . From this very day I am setting to work, and I can't tell

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why, but something tells me I am near
my goal. . . .

TATIANA

Shall I tell you? . . . I know why the
murderer got away last night. . . .

SONIA

How? . . .

TATIANA

Because he was n't in the garden at
all. . . .

SONIA

You thought of that on the spot, with-
out help or trying? . . . But we must
take note of it. . . . You would make a
wonderful examining magistrate. . . .

TATIANA

No, it is n't what you think, and I have

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hardly the heart to make fun. . . . But I don't know what ought to be done, and I wish you were in my place.

SONIA

Your preamble discloses serious torment at heart; it will presently give birth to some terrible and playful enigma, some huge and innocent scruple. It came last night direct from your moon-country, where the babies are lovely but a little unruly. Come, now; let us have the monster. . . . We shall know at once if it has solid ribs, or if, like so many others, it turns into dew at the first cock-crow. . . .

TATIANA

I am not brave enough to tell it you this morning. . . . You seem so happy, so sure of the future.

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SONIA

I am not happy, but full of confidence, and a strength that I do not recognize sustains and shines on me. . . .

TATIANA

You see. . . . It will be better for me to remain silent. . . .

SONIA

Come, I will help you along. . . . I am sure it is still the old phantom returning, that you have found it again in the depths of your heart . . . that you love Axel still? . . .

TATIANA

No! . . .

SONIA

No! it's not that now? . . . Have

The Cloud That Lifted

you lost your ring, or your pearl necklace? . . . Come, help me to it then; I've nothing else to suggest, I tell you. . . .

TATIANA

First of all I want to ask your advice. . . .

SONIA

What, again? I give you advice every day; what do you do with it, and what becomes of all my monitions? . . . I have never found the slightest hint or trace of them in your life. . . . You receive them with a smile, like beautiful flowers whose perfume one breathes in for a moment, and which are then left to lie forgotten on the table. . . . And upon my word it's the wisest thing to do with them. . . . And, anyway, what does it

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matter? . . . my garden of counsels is all but inexhaustible . . . I have ten thousand left that will never be taken. . . . But what is it this time? . . .

TATIANA

This time I will follow your advice at once. . . .

SONIA

That's the way, in the very moment I give it to you, for fear it might evaporate like all the others; for I think that too fine counsellings have subtle perfumes that don't linger for as much as a moment.

TATIANA

Don't go on laughing, I beg you, Sonia . . . this is so grave and so sad. . . .

SONIA

Come, I am serious, since you are so

The Cloud That Lifted

grave. You know well enough that I am only laughing like this to cheat my tears. . . . Now, then, come to me and kiss me; I am listening and I love you dearly. . . .

SONIA

No, I can't say it and kiss you at the same time. . . .

SONIA

Well, then, say it to me without kissing me. . . . But indeed you are making me uneasy; you have never been very long before unfolding your dreams and your fairy-tales. . . . It is something very dreadful then? . . .

TATIANA

Yes. . . .

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SONIA

Well, then? . . .

TATIANA

Well, then! What would you do if you knew a thing that nobody knows . . . that you are the only person, absolutely the single only one person who knows. . . . A frightful thing, and one utterly beyond belief. . . . A thing that must infallibly destroy the happiness of all you love best in the whole world.

SONIA

Good God! What is it? . . . and what is this enigma? . . . First of all I would begin by thinking that such a thing cannot exist, except only in the imagination of a small girl who has been reading novels her mother forgot and left lying about on a garden seat. . . .

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TATIANA

It does exist, nevertheless. . . .

SONIA

Well, then, what? . . . I don't seem to recognize your eyes. . . . Is it about him? . . . Is it about me? . . .

TATIANA

What would you do? . . . You are the one that must decide. . . .

SONIA

But I'll decide anything you wish, provided only you will tell it me. . . . Please to say clearly what you mean. . . . How can you expect any one to give you advice if she does not know all the circumstances. . . . The most trifling circumstance can throw the course of the greatest of duties off the track.

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

I will tell you. . . . Why should I speak? . . . Why should I be silent? . . .

SONIA

Well, then? . . .

TATIANA

It is you who are concerned in it. . . .

SONIA

Ah! . . .

TATIANA

And he. . . .

SONIA

Ah! . . . at last! . . . And so much the better! . . . If it concerns us both, I am reassured. . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

Don't talk like that; I would never have the strength if you do. . . .

SONIA

Come, come then, I'm listening.

TATIANA

Does anybody forgive the one that discloses a misfortune beyond compare? . . .

SONIA

Yes, yes! . . . I tell you yes! . . . But what has happened? . . . Axel is n't hurt? . . . ill? . . . No? . . . What is it, then? . . . What is it? . . .

TATIANA

I know who killed your father. . . .

SONIA

Who? . . . You? . . . When? . . . Since when? . . . But you have twenty

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times told me you didn't know . . .
that you had seen nothing, and that it was
black night, all darkness: . . . And now
you come and tell me—

TATIANA

It is now you must believe me. . . .

SONIA

Well, then, be it so; no matter; but who
is it, who is it? . . .

TATIANA

It was he! . . .

SONIA

He! . . . What he? . . .

TATIANA

Axel! . . .

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SONIA

Axel! . . . Ah, Axel! . . . Don't look at me so stupefied because I am smiling; I know, I know that anything can be expected when one is talking with you. Between you and me that is of no great consequence, and everybody knows that dreams and realities dance such rounds in your childish head . . . that when the dance is done you no longer know yourself what is true or false. . . . Between you and me it is all very well, and we may amuse ourselves with it, but in other times and in other circumstances you ought to be careful; the game might not be without its dangers. . . . But come; let us talk about something else. . . . Where did you put away the letter Tormassov's secretary sent me this morning? . . .

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TATIANA

Perhaps you will believe it if he tells you so himself?

SONIA

If he tells me what? . . .

TATIANA

That he killed your father. . . .

SONIA

Who? . . . Axel? . . . If he tells me so himself? . . . Certainly, I will believe it . . . and I am curious, as a matter of fact, very curious. . . . But why did you not tell me this on the night itself? . . .

TATIANA

Because I was struggling . . . because it was too hideously terrible . . .

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because I hoped always that he would tell you himself as he had promised to do. . . .

SONIA

Ah! . . . he had promised? . . .

TATIANA

Yes. . . .

SONIA

And why has he not done so? . . .

TATIANA

I am afraid he would never be brave enough. . . .

SONIA

He! never be brave enough? . . . But you don't know then. . . . But I am absurd. . . . I am asking questions, discuss-

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ing, arguing, as if I was really beginning to believe. . . . Yet I know you . . . and the fairy world in which you spend your life, a world all full of incoherencies. . . . But you are so serious, so sincere . . . and so full of conviction with your big eyes, as clear as those of a child telling its mother it has seen God, that one always lets oneself be caught and taken in. . . . So, then, all you had told us till this moment was not true? . . .

TATIANA

Everything I have said is true, except when I said I did n't know who fired the shot. . . .

SONIA

And it was he? . . . You saw him? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

Yes. . . .

SONIA

You said it was black as pitch. . . .

TATIANA

The moon shone out now and then. . . .

SONIA

Who fired first? . . . There were six reports? . . .

TATIANA

There were several of them, but Axel fired—

SONIA

Where was he? . . .

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TATIANA

Behind a tree. . . . You know it, the
big dead tree. . . .

SONIA

In hiding! . . . He was waiting, then.
. . . He was on the watch! . . .

TATIANA

He looked as if he was waiting. . . .

SONIA

And my father? . . . What did he
do? . . .

TATIANA

He fired, too. . . .

SONIA

The others did n't fire? . . .

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FATIANA

No, when your father fell, they took to flight. . . .

SONIA

And Axel? . . .

TATIANA

He ran away, too. . . .

SONIA

He knows you recognized him? . . .

TATIANA

Yes.

SONIA

You have spoken to him about it since? . . .

TATIANA

Yes. . . .

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SONIA

And he means to confess to me? . . .

TATIANA

I told him that if he did n't tell you I would tell you myself.

SONIA

And then? . . .

TATIANA

He implored me to say nothing, declaring that it was all chance . . . that he was in self-defence . . . that he had never meant . . . that he was not guilty.

SONIA

[*Angrily.*] You are lying, but I am stupid. . . . When is he coming? . . .

TATIANA

He is waiting for me to call him. . . .

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SONIA

Where is he? . . .

TATIANA

He has spent the night in the empty pavilion. . . . I hid him there while Tormassov's police were beating the garden. . . .

SONIA

What cumbersome mysteries in everything you do! . . . This must come to an end. . . . I laugh once more. . . . I am searching in my mind. . . . I have already seen glimmerings of something suspicious in you . . . a crowd of little traits in your transparent limpid nature that now rise up to explain many things to me. . . . But no, it is n't possible . . . but no, it is too wild . . . too stupid or too malignant. . . .

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TATIANA

[*Bursting into tears.*] Sonia!

SONIA

Call Axel.

[TATIANA *goes out on the right.*
Left alone, SONIA mechanically
goes to the mirror, arranges some
small objects, etc. The door on
right opens. Enter AXEL.]

SCENE II

[SONIA; AXEL.]

SONIA

[*Throwing herself on AXEL's neck.*]
Axel! . . .

AXEL

Sonia! . . . how is it with you? . . . I could n't shut so much as an eye, I was so disturbed by the state I had seen you in last night, so pale, so nervous, so weary and fever-stricken. . . .

SONIA

And I, too, I could never have slept if I had known that you were out there, in

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that room without a bed, without a fire, without a light, a victim to the childish folly of Tatiana. And you submitted to her like an obedient child? . . .

AXEL

The garden was overrun with Tormasov's police. I wanted to spare you anything like a scandal.

SONIA

Have you found out nothing fresh? . . .

AXEL

How could I have found out anything? . . . I have not been out of the house? . . .

SONIA

I have learned something important. . . .

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AXEL

How? . . . from whom? . . .

SONIA

From Tatiana. . . .

AXEL

What was it? . . .

SONIA

Have you no idea of it? . . .

AXEL

I don't know. . . . I am trying to read
in your face to understand why you are
smiling. . . .

SONIA

She says it was you who killed my
father. . . .

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AXEL

What? . . . and she has just told me
. . . she has just been begging me—

SONIA

She is quite mad; we know that. . . .

AXEL

Not mad . . . but—

SONIA

What? . . .

AXEL

Since she has spoken, I must not keep
silence any longer. . . . She has told the
truth. . . .

SONIA

How? . . .

AXEL

Yes, it was I. . . .

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SONIA

You! . . .

AXEL

I . . . without intending it . . . without knowing! . . .

SONIA

I do not believe . . . I can't believe you . . .

AXEL

[*Coming to her.*] Sonia! . . .

SONIA

[*Springing back from him.*] Ah! don't come near me! . . . no! no! . . . don't come forward and don't touch me! . . . It isn't possible! . . . You could never have been able to come like this . . . talk to me, kiss me, without re-

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coiling with shame or crying out the truth in my face. . . . Or then! . . . Oh! then! But no, this is only a dream or some dreadful trial. . . . I cannot see the meaning . . . it is a gust of madness passing—over both of you . . . and trying to sweep me along with it, too. . . . An abominable game! . . . What! . . . the one being I love and could love among all the millions of others that might have done it! . . . He is there before my eyes! . . . coldly lying in wait! . . . No, no, whatever any one may say . . . things like that do not happen, will never happen. . . . But tell me then that it is not true before I fall! . . . Tell me it is all a mockery of my grief, of anything you please . . . I am ready to believe anything, I am ready to understand anything you may say . . . but not that! in God's name! not that . . .

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AXEL

That is the one thing dreadfully true. . . .

SONIA

But then everything is all true! . . .
But then what? . . . what' then? . . .
What do you want? . . . What are you
waiting for? . . . If you come back here,
it is to hunt for death. . . . I have only
to arm myself now with any weapons, no
matter what, anything I find to hand . . .
then it is to brave me, to look at horror,
terror, madness rising up in my eyes and
bursting my bosom. . . . No! . . . No!
. . . it is n't that! . . . There are limits
to everything, even to things beyond im-
agining. . . . I must reason with myself;
I must control myself! . . . I will not let
myself be overthrown like this by the

The Cloud That Lifted

madness that is ravening round my reason. . . .

No! . . . No! . . . I can see very well. . . . There is a mistake, some misapprehension! What do I know? . . . Such things happen, too. . . . We know that everything can happen. . . . But speak, then, answer, and don't stay there like the loud confession incarnate of what ought to be denied.

AXEL

I cannot deny. . . . It is the only way in which I can expiate a fearful mischance. . . .

SONIA

Let us think! . . . let us think, while there is still time! [*Taking her head between her hands.*] For I feel something

The Cloud That Lifted

breaking away here! . . . You that I had chosen! You who, the night before the deed, were so full of hope, of smiles, of plans for happiness, in which my father's name continually entered, to make the victory of our love the brighter! . . . You who even last night dared to come here, to talk to me of other things, to take my hands in those same hands that. . . . No! . . . No! . . . I must know. . . . Above all things let us know everything! . . . and after that we shall see. . . . How did you kill him? . . .

AXEL

You are right. . . . It must needs be told. . . . I was in the garden. . . . I was waiting for you as on the other evenings. . . . I did not know you were away. . . . Your father and Tatiana

The Cloud That Lifted

came out from the house and came down into the park! . . .

SONIA

You recognized them? . . .

AXEL

Alas, I did not! I knew afterwards. . . . I hid behind the trees. . . . A piece of dead wood crackles under my foot. . . . Your father hears the noise . . . turns round . . . sees my shadow, no doubt . . . says two or three words that I do not catch; and, without adding more, fires a revolver in my direction.

SONIA

That very morning he had received a letter threatening him with death.

The Cloud That Lifted

AXEL

I run away. . . . He follows me. . . .
I arrive at the corner made by the two
outer walls of the garden. . . . He fires
again, two shots that miss me, though the
flame of the explosion grazes my cheek.
. . . Thrust against the wall, not know-
ing who is hunting me like this . . .
thinking I have to deal with one of Tor-
massov's policemen, who have been track-
ing me for several days, I in my turn,
in defence of my life, almost without aim,
I fire three times with my revolver. . . .
At the third shot, the shadow, quite close
up to me, utters a cry of distress and
falls. . . . I lean over him. . . . A
beam strikes down from the moon, as
bright as day. . . . I recognize your
father. . . . Tatiana runs up, sees me,
knows me. . . . She calls out for help,

The Cloud That Lifted

and in a low tone implores me to fly. . . .
It is dreadful; it's stupid . . . it's incredible . . . but that's the whole story.

SONIA

Why did you tell me nothing last night? . . .

AXEL

I had come to confess to you. . . .
Tatiana implored me, ordered me to say nothing. . . .

SONIA

Tatiana! . . .

AXEL

Yes, on account of your health, the dangerous attack the doctor was afraid of . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

SONIA

When were you going to speak? . . .

AXEL

Alas! . . . as soon as you were strong enough to bear it! . . .

SONIA

Of your own free will!

AXEL

Sonia! . . .

SONIA

I am at a loss, I am seeking . . . I cannot see two steps in front of me. . . . But if you concealed from me the thing that you came to tell me, is that all? Are you not, for the same reason, hiding something worse from me? . . .

AXEL

Worse! . . . What do you mean? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

SONIA

You killed him then unintentionally, and in defence of your own life? . . . by chance, without knowing . . . without seeing? . . .

AXEL

Yes. If it were otherwise would I be here before you?

SONIA

Others who have told the first true tale now add another to it. . . .

AXEL

I do not follow clearly. . . .

SONIA

Were you alone in the garden? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

AXEL

You know that Tatiana is the only one
who shares our secret. . . .

SONIA

Your accomplices were seen. . . .

AXEL

My accomplices! . . .

SONIA

Why had you a weapon? . . .

AXEL

Alas, I have good reason to be armed;
we must go armed always! . . .

SONIA

And how did you know that he was go-
ing to pass that way, near that dead tree,
where you could best strike him from be-

The Cloud That Lifted

hind? . . . For how many nights had you been watching your opportunity?

AXEL

How many nights? . . . You know so well that I came every night, and that he hardly ever came down into the garden. . . . Strike him from behind! What do you mean? . . . What do you suspect me of? . . . What is all this? . . .

SONIA

"What do you mean? . . . What is all this?" Aye, this is how one speaks, this is how a man would speak though he were lying from the depth of his soul. . . . That proves nothing; the proof is in ourselves. . . . Look at me, and I am sure. . . . How astonished you are, and how

The Cloud That Lifted

you would smile, if the hour was not such a sad one! . . .

[*She takes a step toward AXEL who holds out his arms to her, but at the moment when their hands are about to touch, she draws back with a sharp, instinctive, irresistible movement.*]

Ah no! . . . no! I can't! . . . I don't know when . . . I don't know when! . . . But I love you and I weep. . . . And I long to die and I am almost happy. . . . [*She bursts into sobbing.*]

AXEL

What is it, Sonia; will you not tell me? . . .

SONIA

Nothing. . . . Something very big, and

The Cloud That Lifted

then very little things that we shall laugh
at together, when we come to weep less.

. . . I will call Tatiana so that she may
see her work. [*She opens the door on
the right and calls.*]

Tatiana, you may come in.

[*Then she comes back beside AXEL.*]

. . . TATIANA *appears and pauses
on the threshold.*]

Look at us, Tatiana; misfortune will
have to find another way.

CURTAIN

ACT III

*The same scene. The evening of the
same day.*

ACT III

SCENE I

[SONIA; TATIANA.]

SONIA

Come here, Tatiana. . . . What you have just done is sheer madness, simply inconceivable . . . not to use other words that would be more cruel and more accurate. I have n't even spoken to Axel about your insensate fabrications, it seemed so ridiculous to set his version and yours one against the other. But now that we are alone together, you and I, I wish to hear what made you do such a thing. . . . In spite of everything, there may perhaps be a reason or excuse that I do not perceive even a glimpse of. . . .

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TATIANA

What is it I have done? . . .

SONIA

Come, come, let us not play at being innocents, and let us have done once for all with those crystal limpid looks that deceive nobody any longer. . . . Axel has told me the truth, and there is no need to repeat it to you, since you know it as well as he does. . . . Why did you work up that monstrous tale of yours? . . . For, if it comes to that, even madness itself has a kind of logicity that guides it and that is always possible to discover. . . .

TATIANA

It is quite possible, Sonia, that I was mistaken about certain details. . . . The night was inky black, and I could not see everything. . . .

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SONIA

What was it you told Tormassov? . . .

TATIANA

I told him the truth . . . just what I told you . . . just what I shall have to tell everybody. . . . The whole truth, except that I said not a word about Axel. . . .

SONIA

I was still in hope that there was some mistake, some misunderstanding; some slip of the mind, some aberration. . . . But no, I see that it is all clearly determined and planned. . . . But why is this, Tatiana? . . . Will you tell me why? . . . Is it a trap you have set for our love? . . . Some unnecessary, absurd test? . . . A woman's vengeance? . . . For I am enough of a woman myself to know

The Cloud That Lifted

that we have no need of any motive for vengeance to make us avenge ourselves most horribly. . . . Were you reckoning then on sowing distrust and hatred between me and Axel? . . .

TATIANA

I can easily understand that you have no mind to believe me, Sonia . . . but you ought to put this question to yourself, you who are always so just and fair-minded, which of us, Axel or myself, has the greater interest in not telling the whole truth. . . .

SONIA

Come, Tatiana; you know me; you ought to know me. We have lived so long like sisters together. . . . We are alone now with each other, and you know as well as I do that women among them-

The Cloud That Lifted

selves make no mistakes on these deep matters, and that we always know when there is a lie and when the truth passes between us. . . . Now I find it not possible to believe. . . . I am keeping calm still . . . I don't even bear you a grudge for it . . . I am looking for some ray of innocent simplicity . . . of madness even, if necessary, to try to explain a thing that could only be explained by . . . by something that is wholly impossible. . . . What is it you want? . . . What do you expect, and what have you in mind to do? . . .

TATIANA

What have I in my mind to do? . . .

SONIA

Yes. . . . What do you mean me to do myself? . . . You know perfectly well

The Cloud That Lifted

that if you persist in your abominable lying tale it is impossible for you to go on living here any longer and meeting every day the man you are accusing. . . .

TATIANA

You are going to turn me away if I don't tell a lie? . . . Is that the bargain? . . . Very well, since that is to be the price of the truth, I will tell the whole truth. . . .

SONIA

How? . . .

TATIANA

Tormassov is coming to-night? . . .

SONIA

Yes, he is. . . . Why? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

Because before I leave you both I shall have a word to say to him.

SONIA

No. . . .

TATIANA

Yes, I have not the reasons you have for sparing a murderer. . . .

SONIA

Tatiana! . . . You shall not! . . .

TATIANA

Why should I not, indeed? . . . Is it not my duty? . . . Ah, you have often and often talked to me about duties. . . . Above everything we must be just, and even supposing you did not think he killed your father . . . as I have said . . . it

The Cloud That Lifted

is quite certain, since he confesses to it himself, it is certain that he did kill him. . . . That does n't change the truth at all, and it is n't my intention, before I disappear—for one day I shall disappear—I won't have it happen that punishment should fall on an innocent man through my failing in my duty.

SONIA

You shall not do this as long as I am here. . . .

TATIANA

And how will you stop me?

SONIA

You monster or mad woman! . . . I don't know which! . . . or both together . . . yes, both, for madness by itself could never come to such an infamous

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thing! . . . So it was hatred then, and envy, and evil that you were storing away behind your virgin looks, your child's smile? . . . But no! that's impossible! . . . but no, it is insensate! . . . When I think of the moments when you were so bright, so transparent . . . when you would tell me everything, and I would tell everything to you! . . . You loved me; I loved you! . . . I welcomed you here like a sister in distress. . . . You told me over and over that I had given you back your courage to go on living. . . . Did I not try everything I could do to ease your grief, to give you fresh confidence in the future? . . . What more could I do? . . . Did I not give you everything that any one could give to the sweetest, the tenderest friend? . . . What can you have against me to punish

The Cloud That Lifted

me like this? . . . What unintended slight? . . . What kindness omitted? . . .

TATIANA

Yes . . . let us speak of kindnesses. . . . I will remind you of the greatest one of all, the best of all. . . . How was it that you came to know Axel? . . . Who brought him to you? . . . Who took him from me, knowing that I loved him? . . . Since you are so fond of crushing us from the lofty heights of your justice, you ought to find it perfectly just that I should take him back from you. . . .

SONIA

Be fair, Tatiana; be straight! . . . When Axel told me that he did not love you, that he had never loved you, that he could never love you, I would still never

The Cloud That Lifted

have thought of giving myself up to his love if you yourself had not declared a hundred times that you loved him no longer, that you felt all too well that he was not for you . . . that we must all submit to the fates that are involved in love. . . .

TATIANA

He was not for me because you had taken him from me! . . . Because you had everything to turn aside the love that was still uncertain of itself: you had wealth, power, beauty with more guile and guile with less ingenuousness. . . . And I, had nothing but what you were willing to leave me, out of a treacherous pity, which itself became the fairest ornament of the love you had filched from a tongue-tied defenceless child! . . . Ah, I have suffered enough! . . . and I have wept

The Cloud That Lifted

enough of the tears you always tenderly feigned not to see, the better to gloat over your triumph! . . . Ah! . . . I have lain long enough with all the weight of my silence and too loyal resignation upon my too just hate that was always longing to leap up and shriek the odious truth into your face! . . . And I would have gone on being cowardly, gone on being stupid, gone on submitting to what I was silly enough to call my "destiny." . . . I would have gone away without a word; and, credulous, innocent easy dupe that I was, just to prove to you, my beloved big sister, that I had profited by your noble lessons, so splendidly disinterested, I would have made believe that I shared your joy . . . that I was calling a blessing on your happiness, built up out of mine that you had demolished! . . . But the god of chance was juster and took pity

The Cloud That Lifted

on me, and opened my eyes! . . . And now it is chance that guides my steps, chance is my master and since it has come, let it be welcome! . . . Its will is clear, since that will alone is just. . . . Chance has given me weapons, and weapons such that if I discarded them, I should be committing a crime! . . . I have nothing to do henceforth but to let chance act, to let myself go along the road in which chance leads me! . . . My hate and my conscience follow the same path, and to fulfil my duty now I have only just to destroy you, and it is done!

SONIA

You appal me! . . .

TATIANA

Ah! it stupefies you that any one should wake up like this! Shut eyes are not al-

The Cloud That Lifted

ways asleep! . . . Yes! yes! I appal you, and will appal you still more when you see that I do not pause or stay, that I go on to the very end, that I have other passions and another way of hate and another way of love than your passions of ice and your wax-doll loving! . . . I am not sprung from a race that measures and weighs this and that! . . . And I will show you what one does when one loves like a real being and not like a prudent chop-logic ghost; and the force of the hate will teach you to measure the strength of the love you never saw. . . .

SONIA

I see that you will sacrifice me, and I offer myself up to your hate. . . . But Axel! . . . Have you no consideration for him? . . . Do you hate him, too, then? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

But he is the one I hate, since he is the one I love! . . . Do you really imagine, Sonia, that I would take the trouble to avenge myself on you! Do you know nothing at all of all the things that lie within love—what love is? . . . Why, if he did not love you, you wouldn't even exist! . . . Since you took him from me, since I have lost him, and since he is blind and could not distinguish the humble but unquenchable love that burned in secret from the great painted flames with which you dazzled his eyes . . . well, then! so much the worse for him! . . . I would rather, a thousand times rather, see him dead at my feet than alive in your arms. . . . There is nothing to be done; I simply leave everything to fate, fate that is merely justice coming from all sides! . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

No one will ever be able to say I did not do right! . . . for giving up the guilty means saving the innocent. . . . No one will ever be able to say that I harmed you when I prevented you from loving the man who killed . . . perhaps at your bidding . . . perhaps to gain a little time . . . or who knows what. . . .

SONIA

Tatiana!

TATIANA

How can I tell? . . . Can any one tell? . . . In all this affair, your heart, your words, your inmost thoughts are all filled with such a heap of lies, of treacherous tendernesses, of insulting kindnesses and counterfeit virtues, that one is bogged to the very neck the moment one ventures in it—

The Cloud That Lifted

[A knock is heard on the door to the left. Enter a servant who gives a note to SONIA who reads the address and says.]

SONIA

It is a note from Tormassov addressed to both of us.

TATIANA

Good, open it and read it. . . .

SONIA

[Reads.] "Let whichever of you two inseparables receives this note call her friend at once. . . . It concerns a great piece of good news, one that is of interest to both of you and demands the presence of both!

"It is almost certain that we have got the murderer this time. He is a young

The Cloud That Lifted

man from Abo; he declares his name is Axel Thorild. If this is not an assumed name, which we shall very soon ascertain, it figures already in the reports of the secret police. It belongs to a most dangerous patriot, one of the hidden heads of the Scandinavian faction, who for some time past has been under special surveillance. Naturally he denies any share in the crime; but, besides the fact that he has often been seen prowling around your garden, the witness of whom I have told you already, without being absolutely definite, would possibly have less hesitation in recognizing him if he were not under suspicion himself. However this may be, the thing at the moment is to bring the culprit face to face with our good little Tatiana, so that she may decide finally and authoritatively. So as not

The Cloud That Lifted

to disturb you disagreeably, and also in order to hasten matters, and to confront him with her on the actual scene of the crime, I will bring him to you under proper guard. . . . You need have no fears! . . . at ten o'clock precisely. So let both of you be at the post of duty!"

Tatiana!

TATIANA

Well, then? . . . It's half-past nine now; there is n't a long time to wait; I'll go and change my dress. . . .

SONIA

Tatiana! . . . I implore you! . . . Tatiana! . . . I am yours. . . . I surrender; I bow down before you; I understand; I absolve you of blame! . . . I have been selfish, blind, unjust, as we are all too often when we are in love! I never knew

The Cloud That Lifted

you still loved him . . . that you loved him like this! . . . What would you have me do to win you to take pity? . . . Ah, never envy me again at all. . . . You are the victor! . . . If I have been overproud, if love gave me more happiness than I deserved, it is all crushed, and it is all over and ended! . . . Tatiana! . . . I hope even now that this is your vengeance, that it will stop at this and that you will be satisfied now. . . . You have everything in the hollow of your hand; we are at your mercy. . . . Does a generous soul demand more than this? For me, if you punish me, it is well. . . . It is just, indeed, since you think it just and because I never saw that you were suffering side by side with my blind love. . . . But he? . . . you forgot too completely that you still love him. . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

When we hate the thing we love, you see, it is all in vain; we love more deeply than we hate. . . . He went on his way, never knowing that he was hurting you. . . . You never told him you loved him like this. . . . He could not grieve or betray the thing he never knew. . . .

TATIANA

So you want me to tell a lie, then, to indicate some one else? . . . But would you do that if you were in my place? . . . You are too ready to forget that he killed your father . . . and killed him in circumstances that would look very suspicious to anybody except a woman who is gaining a lover by it.

SONIA

Tatiana! you know how to strike where it hurts. . . . Tatiana, you can see it for

The Cloud That Lifted

yourself. I am at the end of my strength, and I don't know which evil to choose. . . . If our happiness vexed you—and I can almost understand that, since you loathe me—you see that now this happiness is not worth a tear from you, and that it is sad enough to break down all hate. . . . How am I to go on loving him? . . . How is he to love me? . . . Our love is lost, ruined . . . chance has willed it so . . . there is nothing more to be done. . . . But Axel's life is still in your hands. . . . He is the one we love; let us think only of him. . . . I am ready for anything. . . . Tatiana, listen to me. Tatiana, I will tell you. . . . I give up all idea of happiness. . . . I surrender my own share to win mercy for him. . . . Take it; I will go away, and I will disappear for ever. . . . Take it; he will come and will never know.

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

Good, this second bargain offer is just what I was expecting, too. . . . How low will you stoop? . . . You amuse me and disgust me all at once. . . . So you have just offered me the goodly leavings of a happiness that is slipping away from you! . . . You imagine I am very simple and guileless in spite of what I have done. . . . When Axel is there, and Tormasov has asked me, "Is this the guilty man?" and when I've said "No," what will there be left for me? . . . You perceive, my good friend, I have not the slightest confidence. . . . And I can see you already, going away, the two of you together, free, happy, smiling, steeped in a happiness more and more intoxicating the more tragic it is. . . . You will both thank me as you pass by, in low tones, so

The Cloud That Lifted

that nobody can suspect anything. . . .
And I, I will be left there, with empty
hands, all desolate, alone, disarmed, im-
potent, baffled, sublime, but a stupid
fool! . . .

SONIA

[*Rising from her seat.*] I can neither
implore nor offer any more. . . . The
hour is coming nearer. . . . So it is set-
tled that when Axel is here you will ac-
cuse him? . . .

TATIANA

It is settled that I shall speak the
truth. . . .

SONIA

Your truth. . . .

TATIANA

Nothing but the truth. . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

SONIA

Be it so; we will argue no more. . . .
Do your worst. . . . Give him up,
coldly, basely! . . . But look at me well,
for when two living beings look at one
another like this, there is something that
vouches for their final true intentions far
better than their speech, far better than
their oaths can do. . . . Look at me, I
tell you! . . . The very moment you ruin
him— I do not need to finish. . . . I
am sure that you see what my soul has
in mind, what my whole being is thinking,
everything that causes it to live, every-
thing that can kill it. . . .

TATIANA

And do you in your turn look at me,
and do not repeat your threat.

[SONIA is silent. TATIANA goes out,
keeping her eyes fixed on her.

The Cloud That Lifted

Presently there is a ring at the outer door of the house. SONIA goes to a secretaire standing in a corner of the room, takes a small revolver from it and puts it down, within reach of her hand, on the table near which she proceeds to sit down. Enter TORMASSOV.]

SCENE II

[SONIA; TORMASSOV.]

TORMASSOV

[*Hardly able to control himself for joy.*] Good evening, Sonia! . . . You are feeling better than you did yesterday? . . . You are looking perfectly splendid. . . . Did you have my little note? . . .

SONIA

Yes. . . . And what then? . . .

TORMASSOV

Are you pleased? . . . Are you glad? . . .

SONIA

Yes . . . although . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

Although what? . . .

SONIA

We can't be sure yet. . . .

TORMASSOV

We know already . . . we know already . . . and then we *shall* know . . . we shall know. . . . You will see. . . . Where is Tatiana? . . .

SONIA

She is coming. . . .

TORMASSOV

She does n't know, then? . . .

SONIA

Yes, yes, she has gone to change her dress, I think.

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

That's just a woman all over! . . .
On the day of judgment they will be late
all for that "other frock." . . . Fortunately
there are good theologians who maintain
that they are not to have any dresses
at all, "*du tout point*," as my pet poet
Malherbe puts it. Well now, and what
do you say about it all?

SONIA

About what? . . .

TORMASSOV

About my capture, of course! . . .
You don't look as though you believed it,
or appreciated it. . . . And I fancied
you would jump for joy, acclaim me, kiss
me! . . . No, but this time I think I
have been prompt and lucky with my task.
. . . Ah, I've lost no time! . . . For

The Cloud That Lifted

the last two days now I have been grouping together certain facts that were not lacking in significance, and now it is all daylight, everything dovetails together, and it all corroborates itself. . . . The witness who ran into him . . . the police reports on the other plots, his political attitude, his habits, and the secret budget about him. . . . In short, there's nothing wanting now but Tatiana's evidence, which will be final and decisive. . . . Everything depends on that. . . . Meanwhile I would n't give much for his life, hanging on a yes or a no. . . . But what are you thinking of? . . . You don't seem to be taking any very great interest in what I am saying? . . .

SONIA

Where is he? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

In the antechamber, between two stout guards. . . . He is young and elegant and distinguished-looking.

SONIA

I want to see him before Tatiana. . . .
Bring him in.

TORMASSOV

That 's easy. . . .

SONIA

But free. . . . He must be at liberty.
. . . I don't want the guards. . . .

TORMASSOV

I understand. . . . It has n't come to prison yet. . . . Nor what is to follow. . . . In any case, he is a gentleman and won't make a scene. . . . He seems to be

The Cloud That Lifted

resigned, and he does n't struggle. . . .
They are all the same. . . . Great heroes
before. . . . The world is all too narrow
to hold their mighty spirit. . . . But
once they are caught, good-bye! . . .
They collapse like puppets when you cut
the strings. . . . And then of course we
won't lose sight of him. . . . I'll bring
him in. . . .

[TORMASSOV *goes out by the door on
the left and comes back next mo-
ment bringing AXEL into the draw-
ing-room.*]

SCENE III

[SONIA; TORMASSOV; AXEL.]

TORMASSOV

[*To AXEL.*] Over here, if you please; will you be good enough to come nearer the light? . . . [*To SONIA.*] Do you recognize him? . . .

SONIA

[*Who has exchanged a swift look of misery with AXEL.*] No!

TORMASSOV

You don't recollect. . . . You've never seen him? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

SONIA

Never. . . .

TORMASSOV

And you, monsieur, what are your feelings face to face with your victim's daughter? . . . I am not going to make any phrases about it, but it is a grave and decisive moment. . . . It is still within your power in some degree to lessen your guilt. . . . If you will make a confession spontaneously and of your own accord, I guarantee that it will be counted in your favour. In a moment, when the witness on whom your fate depends has recognized you, it will be too late. . . . What is the use of standing out against the evidence.

AXEL

What evidence do you see, monsieur?

The Cloud That Lifted

. . . I can only repeat what I have told you already. . . . "If this witness identifies me, that witness must either be deceived or be deceiving you."

TORMASSOV

She can't possibly be deceived; she saw you as clearly as I see you at this moment, and has declared she could recognize the murderer in a crowd. . . . As for deceiving us, why should she do that? . . . Mademoiselle Tatiana is the best and truest friend of Mademoiselle de Bielsky, and Mademoiselle de Bielsky will herself declare to you that her friend's evidence is as certain and trustworthy as that of her own eyes. . . . Is it not so, Sonia? . . . [*Sonia does not reply.*] Sonia! . . .

SONIA

What is it? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

You are not listening to me. . . .
Well, then, I am not sorry that there is an opportunity, before Mademoiselle Tatiana arrives, of making this gentleman understand the value, the infallible nature, of this evidence. Isn't that so, Sonia? . . . Tell monsieur what you think of it. . . .

SONIA

I think I hear her in the garden. . . .
Yes, she is singing. . . . She does not know it is after ten and that we are waiting for her here.

TATIANA

[Outside, singing as she passes in front of the windows at the back.]

L'amant dit à la belle:

Où est la vérité?

The Cloud That Lifted

La vérité, dit-elle,

Qui donc s'en fut douté,

La vérité, dit-elle,

Est morte et enterrée.

[*In the silence that has fallen after the song, she is heard murmuring, as she tries to open the glass door at the back: Heavens! how stiff this key is, how hard this door is to open. . . . Ah, at last. . . . It's giving. . . .* She comes in immediately, pretending not to see AXEL or TORMASSOV, and, turning her back to them, she goes straight to the table near which SONIA is standing.]

SCENE IV

[SONIA; TATIANA; AXEL; TORMASSOV.]

TATIANA

[*To SONIA.*] What time is it, Sonia?
. . . Oh, the lovely moonlight on the lilacs all in bloom! . . . Look, you can see it from here. . . . [*Catching sight of the little revolver on the table.*] Ah, you have found the little revolver I gave you the day I arrived! . . . Where was it? . . . I thought it was lost. . . . What a funny little thing it is! . . . Do you think it could make a real wound? . . . Is it loaded? . . . Why, there's a spot of rust! . . . I'll take it to my room.

The Cloud That Lifted

. . . What? . . . You don't answer?

. . . What is the matter? . . .

TORMASSOV

[*Coming up to TATIANA and laying his hand on her shoulder.*] Tatiana!

TATIANA

Oh! . . . it's you, is it? . . . I had n't noticed you were there. . . . It's ten already. . . . I did n't imagine it was. . . . And your prisoner, when are we to see him? . . . Have you brought him? . . . Where is he? . . .

TORMASSOV

Here he is; look at him. . . .

TATIANA

Where is he? . . . Who? . . . This gentleman? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

Yes, look closely at him; this is the man. . . .

TATIANA

He? . . . No, I don't know him. . . .
I have never seen him before. . . .

TORMASSOV

Are you sure? . . .

TATIANA

Indeed, yes. . . . This gentleman is
much taller . . . much handsomer. . . .
So what are you going to do with him?

TORMASSOV

Nothing. [*To AXEL.*] Monsieur,
you are at liberty, for the present, but I
advise you to be more circumspect in your
conduct in future.

The Cloud That Lifted

TATIANA

Do you know what I have just been seeing? . . . The beauty of the night, and that was enough for me. . . . [*Looking at AXEL and bursting into laughter.*] Heavens! how embarrassed he looks!

[She goes out and is heard still chuckling and laughing as she gets further away. After she has gone there is silence, and then, just as TORMASSOV moves towards the antechamber saying, "I must tell the guards," a shot is heard in the adjoining room.]

TORMASSOV

What is that?

SONIA

Tatiana!

The Cloud That Lifted

AXEL

[*Forgetting himself.*] Go to her!

[SONIA *dashes into the next room and is heard calling out, "Tatiana! Tatiana! What have you done?" Then she reappears on the threshold, holding up TATIANA, who is fainting.*]

SONIA

Help me! . . . She is falling . . .
She is dying!

[AXEL and TORMASSOV *hurry to her and carry TATIANA to the divan.*]

TATIANA

[*In the death-rattle. Pointing to her heart.*]

It's here! . . . it's all over. Where
is Tormassov? . . .

The Cloud That Lifted

TORMASSOV

Here. . . . Don't speak.

TATIANA

Yes, it was I . . . you are not to search further.

TORMASSOV

What is she saying? . . .

SONIA

She is delirious. . . .

TATIANA

No . . . it was I . . . you know . . .
Enough.

[She falls back on the divan.]

CURTAIN

THE POWER OF THE DEAD

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JEAN D'YPERMONDE

JALLINE LE MOYNE (*his betrothed*)

PIERRE LE MOYNE (*Jalline's half-
brother*)

THE JUGE D'INSTRUCTION

MATHIEU MEYER (*the money-lender*)

JACQUES (*the old maître d'hotel*)

THÉCLA (*Jean's old nurse*)

TONIA (*the cook*)

PETRUS (*the old gardener*)

LINETTE (*the old gardener's grand-
daughter*)

A SERGEANT OF GENDARMES

GUESTS, *Jean's friends*

LINETTE'S MOTHER.

A MAGISTRATE'S CLERK

NEIGHBOURS, PEASANTS, etc.

The time is to-day in Flemish Flanders.

ACT I

The great hall in the Château d'Ypermonde, a very old hall in the Gothic style. Bookcases, tapestries, marble busts of magistrates, all ancestors of Jean d'Ypermonde. On the left a vast fireplace with a hood. On the left of this fireplace, towards the foreground, a door, under a three-centred Gothic archway. On the right big mullioned windows, with outside shutters. In the background three doors under Gothic arches, also three-centred. In front of the middle door there is a life-sized statue in the clay, partly covered with damp cloths. In the middle of the hall there is a large table laid for some ten persons, with plate, glass, fruits, flowers, etc., etc. A Flemish clock, heavy arm-chairs, etc.

ACT I

SCENE I

[*Enter JEAN D'YPERMONDE, followed by his servants: JACQUES (the old maître d'hotel), THÉCLA (the old nurse), TONIA (the cook), and PETRUS (the old gardener), with LINETTE his granddaughter.*]

JEAN

[*Taking off his motoring cap and coat, and handing them to the maître d'hotel.*]

Here, take this, it's a bit heavy. . . .

[*Casting his eyes all around the hall.*]

Good, good. . . . Everything is in order, everything is in good condition. . . . I

The Power of the Dead

was afraid for this hall especially, as it is the oldest part of the house. . . . [*To the maître d'hotel.*] No hidden ravages, my dear Jacques, no urgent repairs called for?

JACQUES

A few drip-spots over the small door, Monsieur Jean. But the Audenarde tapestry has taken no harm. . . . I have had a few slates replaced. . . . And over there on the right, under the windows, there is a touch of damp, just as there always has been. . . . The wainscoting is crumbling away and is only holding together because it has got the habit. . . . Old Vandermeulen, the master mason, whom I have sent for. . . .

JEAN

Old Vandermeulen. . . . So he's still alive?

The Power of the Dead

JACQUES

Yes, he 's alive still, but he 's getting very old, like the rest of us. . . . He says there 's nothing to be done, on account of the river. . . .

JEAN

Well, what can you expect, my dear old Jacques? . . . It has seen three centuries go by, has this same hall. . . . And it 's holding out stoutly, all the same. . . . Our fathers built better than we do. . . . Anyhow, I 'm quite satisfied, and I must thank you; you have taken good care of our old home; for it 's yours, too, in some fashion, considering the long time you have been in it. . . . How many years is it now?

JACQUES

It will soon be twenty-six years since

The Power of the Dead

I took service with your father, when he was still only president of the Civil Court. . . .

JEAN

And you, my dear old nurse Thécia, how are you?

THÉCLA

Not so bad, Monsieur Jean, if it was n't for my rheumatics. . . . I'm taking to stooping a bit, and I'm growing old. . . . Just think, it will soon be twenty-five years since you were born, and I was thirty-two when I began to nurse you.

JEAN

Yes, yes, indeed, it begins to mount up . . . but you will see younger folk than yourself into the grave, dear Thécia.

The Power of the Dead

. . . And you, good old Petrus, how is the garden getting on? . . . I caught a glimpse of it as I passed in the car; it does n't look at all too bad, any more than you do yourself.

PETRUS

It is n't too bad, Monsieur Jean, but it gives me a bad time enough, what with all the old trees in it. . . . There are far too many of them, Monsieur Jean; they eat everything up. . . . I can't get flowers to come round the château any longer. . . . There ought to be a lot of cutting down, but I never dare to do it without orders. . . . And then there are the ditches that want to be thoroughly cleaned out and cleared of weeds, the water hardly runs through them now; and when the river rises the kitchen garden

The Power of the Dead

is flooded out; it has ruined all my green peas, this year. . . .

JEAN

And me coming specially to have the pleasure of eating them! Well, then, we'll see about all that. . . . How is that very pretty daughter of yours? . . . Is she married? . . .

PETRUS

Yes, indeed, married to Théophile; you know him, Monsieur Jean. . . .

JEAN

Théophile? . . . What Théophile is that?

PETRUS

The son of Prosper at the farm, Monsieur Jean. . . . It's a very good match . . . and she is very happy, but she is

The Power of the Dead

laid up in bed. . . . She has never quite recovered from her last baby. . . . The doctor says it is n't serious, but that it will take time. . . . But here is her little girl, Monsieur Jean. . . . Where are you, Linette? . . . She's hiding behind the table with her bouquet. . . . She's very shy, Monsieur Jean. . . . Come along now, Linette; come here and give Monsieur Jean the nice bouquet you made to welcome him.

JEAN

[*Picking up Linette and kissing her on both cheeks.*] She's a nice little thing indeed. . . . She is like her mother. . . . Yes, yes, these are lovely flowers and we'll see if we can't turn them into good chocolates. But I never knew your daughter had a daughter of her own already?

The Power of the Dead

PETRUS

She's three and a half, Monsieur Jean; it's nearly four years now that Monsieur Jean has been away without coming back to the old place. . . .

JEAN

That's true, it's all of nearly four years. . . . Time runs away and life goes on. . . . Ah, well! Let us not lose too much of this time that runs away so fast. . . . As I wrote to you, I am having a few friends to dinner to-night to celebrate my return. . . . Is everything ready? . . . I see the table has been laid. . . . That's all right! . . . All the good old silver at its post. . . . Flowers, too, and fruit. . . . Fine peaches and splendid grapes! . . . My best congratulations, my good old Petrus. . . . And the wines,

The Power of the Dead

Jacques? . . . What condition are they in? . . . I sent you the keys of the cellar. . . .

JACQUES

I have put the 1895 Barsac and the Château Yquem on ice. I have decanted the 1897 Château-Margaux and the Saint-Emilion. They seem to be just right. . . . As for the Burgundies, the 1904 Clos Vougeot and the 1906 Beaune, they ought to be ripe; I have brought them up and stood them in the warm room, but I don't know if they will come up to what you expect.

JEAN

We'll soon see that. . . . And you, Tonia . . . indeed yes, I've not shaken hands with you yet. I'm relying alto-

The Power of the Dead

gether on you for the menu. . . . It will be something special, eh? . . . You know, these will be connoisseurs. . . .

TONIA

First of all, there will be . . .

JEAN

No, don't tell me a single thing, I have complete confidence in you and it will be a surprise.

SCENE II

JALLINE

[*Running up to JEAN.*] Bonjour, Jean.

JEAN

Jalline . . . what! . . . Jalline. . . .
And you, Pierre! . . . Bonjour, Pierre! . . .

PIERRE

Bonjour, my dear old Jean! What a really splendid day this is that brings us all together!

JEAN

[*To JALLINE.*] I never expected you;

The Power of the Dead

I never hoped to see you! . . . They told me you were away. . . .

JALLINE

And so I was indeed, at one of my uncles; but the moment they told me you were coming back to-day, you can be sure I could n't stay where I was any longer! I jumped into a car that they were kind enough to lend me, I reeled off the fifty kilometres that separated us, and here I am to be the very first of all to greet you and bid you welcome. . . . But you don't look superlatively happy to see me again. . . .

JEAN

Oh, but yes, yes, indeed, Jalline. . . . If it could go into words! . . . Only, it's the surprise of it; I was so far from expecting. . . . And then, I'm inaugurat-

The Power of the Dead

ing my return with a wretched bungle that I shall never be able to forgive myself for. . . . Instead of being able to devote my whole evening to you, because I thought you were ever so far away, I have invited a few old friends to dine with me in my ancestral château. . . . It is a party of more or less rowdy bachelor men to which I could n't possibly ask you. . . . Unluckily it's too late now to put them off. . . . They may be here at any moment. . . .

JALLINE

I know, I know; Pierre has told me about it already; and told me, too, that you wanted to speak to him privately. . . . Now what can it be you have to say to him? . . . Can't I hear it? . . .

JEAN

Oh, young men's matters. . . .

The Power of the Dead

JALLINE

Ah, that means young women. . . .
Nothing very serious, I suppose? . . .

JEAN

Nothing serious, if you like. . . .
Pierre will tell you all about it.

JALLINE

But what is the matter? It does n't seem to be really you at all. . . . I came all full of happiness, just the same as I left you, the last time we were together in Paris, more than a year ago; and here you are receiving me more like a lady come to pay a call. . . . What has happened then? . . . You have n't even so much as kissed me. . . .

JEAN

[*Kissing her.*] My own Jalline . . .

The Power of the Dead

if you only knew! . . . It is simply that I dare no longer venture . . . but Pierre will tell you. . . .

JALLINE

[*Looking at him.*] Jean! . . . You are frightening me. . . .

JEAN

Don't be afraid. . . . It is just so that I may still be worthy of you that I want to have a talk with your brother first of all.

JALLINE

Very well. . . . Just as you like. . . . But I don't understand a bit, and I won't be able to live in the mean time. . . . Now I shall run away. . . . When shall I see you again?

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

Immediately this wretched dinner that I can't possibly get out of is over. . . . Pierre will let you know. . . . I'll come and look for you in the alley between your park and mine. . . .

JALLINE

All right . . . that's the alley of the dear old days . . . our very own alley. . . . But be quick, hurry on the dessert, and don't give them too much to drink. . . . In the meanwhile I shall be having bad, bad, dreams. . . .

JEAN

No, no, dear Jalline, I assure you. . . . I don't deserve that the tiniest grief should cloud your smile.

The Power of the Dead

JALLINE

We shall see. . . . I am not altogether
comfortable in my own mind. . . .
Good-bye, Jean! . . .

JEAN

Au revoir, Jalline . . . and very soon.
[*She goes out.*]

SCENE III

[JEAN D'YPERMONDE; PIERRE
LE MOYNE.]

JEAN

Dear, good Jalline! . . . This is all
our childhood waking into life again. . . .
[*Looking at Pierre.*] You haven't
changed much. . . .

PIERRE

Neither have you. . . . Just a little,
all the same.

JEAN

Oh, me, I've been through a time of
it! . . . There must have been some

The Power of the Dead

funny yarns floating round about me. . . .
we know what the provinces are.

PIERRE

They said you were playing the deuce in
Paris and elsewhere. . . . And sometimes
there were certain details, as well. . . .

JEAN

Listen, my dear Pierre, I must talk to
you without any reservation . . . make
a clean breast of it. . . . I asked you to
come a little earlier than anybody else, be-
cause I have some very serious things to
say to you. . . . With an old friend like
you I won't go beating about the bush.
. . . Such as you see me, with a good
face on things still and as fit as possible,
I am an almost completely ruined man, a
man driven into the corner, who no longer
knows exactly how he stands; and I've

The Power of the Dead

come here, not to take up my abode in this château, which to-morrow perhaps will belong to me no longer, but to clear up and settle a financial position that can't possibly continue without ending in a crash. . . .

PIERRE

I'm not so much surprised as you may think at what you are telling me, for there has been a rumour going round for some time that your affairs were in a pretty bad way and that the château and most of the farms were overburdened with mortgages. . . . But I had n't a notion that the position was so serious. . . . How the devil have you managed to get into such a fix?

JEAN

You get there much quicker than you

The Power of the Dead

imagine, when you are as rash and as weak and as stupid as I am. . . . For I'm nothing but an idiot, a vain fellow, a simple good-for-nothing. I'm profoundly sick with myself! . . . I had real happiness in my hands, and look what I've done with it! . . . I have got nothing but what I deserve! . . . The stupid Paris life, women, gambling, and then, to retrieve myself, the more or less shaky business affairs in which I let myself get entangled, like an ass. . . . Oh, you need n't be alarmed. . . . I have n't done anything either dishonest or dishonourable; but that's the utmost I can claim to have steered clear of. . . . One fine morning I felt it was time to put on the brake, and to make a last effort to get out of this sewer of a life and these doubtful expedients with some little decency left. . . . But how and in what

The Power of the Dead

condition am I going to get out? I am in the hands of the worst shark of a money-lender in all our good town, old Daddy Meyer . . . you know him as well as I do, and he would n't show the least mercy to his own son! . . .

PIERRE

Daddy Meyer! *Do* I know him! . . . He 's a public calamity, that fellow! . . . We 're all of us, more or less, victims of his; we 're all in the same boat together, and not one of us is a bit better off than his neighbours! . . . He has seen me in his den, especially just lately, oftener than he ought, though thanks to my good old father who is still hanging on to the purse-strings, and hangs on to them tight, I can't treat myself to the same wild games as you. . . .

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

Well, never mind Daddy Meyer . . . he won't be long before he crops up again and reminds me of his existence. . . . I just wanted soberly and candidly to let you know this: It's all over with me, and I have n't anything to look forward to; and so in the circumstances I can no longer look on myself as worthy of your sister's hand. . . . Let her try to forget me; she deserves something better. As for me, I shall never forget her; I have never forgotten her even in my worst escapades; and if I have n't sunk lower than I did I owe it to the fact that she was always in my mind. . . . I release her from her promise; this is the only honourable and praiseworthy thing I have left in my power to do. You know how much I love her, and so you will realize what a sacrifice I am making.

The Power of the Dead

PIERRE

I know, I know. . . . But I can't follow you. . . . To begin with, I'm sure you are exaggerating the seriousness of your position; when it's all settled up you'll find you have probably a very handsome residue. However enthusiastically you may set about it, you can't swallow up such a fortune as yours in four little years. . . . There are always little hidden corners and stray pockets of gold-dust that escape the creditors. . . . And, anyhow, if your affairs were ten times worse than you say, I'm quite sure of one thing, and that is that Jalline loves you too well, and has loved you too long—for it goes right back to baby times—to give you up and renounce the promise you gave her. She is one of the women that only love once in their lives.

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

That's just what makes me see all I've lost, stupidly, foolishly, shamefully, all through my own fault! . . . But even supposing that Jalline was still fond of me, it's quite certain that your father will never consent to let her join her fate to a miserable ruin like me. . . .

PIERRE

You forget that Jalline will soon be of age and that she has a fortune of her own left her by one of her aunts; so whatever happens she'll be rich enough for both of you. . . .

JEAN

That's something I can't possibly accept. . . .

The Power of the Dead

PIERRE

It's something you'll have to accept when you see that it's a question of her very life; and you can take it from me that it's no less than that. . . . But I'm a great idiot to be mixing myself up like this in something that doesn't concern me. . . . You and she will take it over between yourselves; and you'll see that only two things count in life—money and love. . . . But let us talk about something else. . . . What is that over in the corner there, by the fireplace?

JEAN

That's the clay model for the statue of my father meant for the monument they are going to put up to him opposite the Palais de Justice. . . . The sculptor was working in the orangery, but it seems the light is n't good in there, and there's not

The Power of the Dead

room enough for a proper walk back. I've had it brought in here. I have only seen photographs of it so far, and I'd be very glad to have your opinion about it as well as my friends' ideas, too, for I'm not altogether satisfied.

PIERRE

Let's have a look at it. [*He adjusts his eye-glasses.*]

JEAN

[*Watching him as he does so.*] Do you know you've only one glass in them?

PIERRE

How, only one glass?

JEAN

Oh, but yes . . . look. . . . [*He takes the glasses and passes a finger through the tortoise-shell frame.*]

The Power of the Dead

PIERRE

That's quite true. . . . How annoying! . . . Where the devil have I lost that glass?

JEAN

It's no great loss. . . . The first optician you come to will replace it for you.

PIERRE

Indeed, he just won't. . . . Look, these are special lenses, bifocal, so that I can see both close to and at a distance. . . . The numbers I need are n't kept in stock; they've got to be made to order and it takes a long time. . . . I can't imagine where I've lost that glass.

JEAN

Come on; you can still see well enough with them to tell me what you think of the model. . . .

The Power of the Dead

[*They go up to the statue and JEAN strips it partially of its wet cloths.*]

There you are! . . . It's not bad!
It's even rather like. . . .

PIERRE

It's very like him! . . . It's just your father's grand head. . . . You might imagine he's just going to open his mouth and pronounce one of those Olympian judgments of his that used to define the law and win the admiration of the court. . . .

JEAN

Yes, I know . . . but it's not enough to get that. . . . There's something wanting . . . the movement, the style, I don't know what it is. . . . My father looked different. . . .

The Power of the Dead

PIERRE

Ah, yes, indeed, but you will never get that. . . . There are some things the very greatest of sculptors cannot express, a soul he can never catch. . . . Your father was the whole essence of the magistrate's office, the very incarnation of the magistrate, the last descendant of a long line of judges, the last but one of the d'Ypermondes, and that says everything. . . .

JEAN

The last of the d'Ypermondes but one, you've just said so; and if he could see what the last one is, and what he has become! . . .

PIERRE

Come, come, don't begin again, and

The Power of the Dead

don't go diving into your black moods any more. . . . You're not done for yet, hang it all! . . . At your age and with the love that is waiting for you! . . . You'll see, it will all come out perfectly right in the end. . . . [*Looking at the clock.*] A quarter to eight! . . . Your guess will be here; I must go off and change. . . .

JEAN

So must I. . . .

PIERRE

I came along just as I was from my garden, where I was in the middle of grafting my roses. . . . I'll jump over the hedge! . . . So-long! . . . And look here, above all, don't be downhearted. . . . There's nothing lost as long as love

The Power of the Dead

remains . . . and love is at his post, I
can assure you!

[He goes out.]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV.

The same hall. Ten young men, JEAN D'YPERMONDE'S friends, in evening-clothes, are sitting round the table. There is all the little disarray and the animation that mark the end of a good dinner. They are drinking healths.

ONE OF THE GUESTS

[*Rising.*] Now that our friend Paul Dufresne has expressed, with all that eloquence for which we know him so well, the delight we all of us feel, my dear Jean, at finding ourselves once again under your roof, and in renewing after your long ab-

The Power of the Dead

sence those relations of cordial frank friendship that for most of us go back to our very earliest childhood, allow me to give utterance to a wish that I am sure dwells ardently in the bottom of every heart here present; and this wish is that we might see the last of the d'Ypermondes, the descendant of the longest line of magistrates without fear and without reproach that our judicial annals can boast of, that we may see him before long among us at the bar or in the magistracy, occupying the place to which he has a prescriptive right, the place that awaits him, the place it is his duty to fill; for there is a nobility of wig and gown to which is nothing short of treason that a man should renounce wearing its honourable and glorious livery.

The Power of the Dead

ALL THE GUESTS

Bravo! . . . Bravo! . . . That's true!
. . . Hear! Hear! . . . He must be one
of us! . . . To Jean's future career!
. . . To our future president of the Court
of Appeal! . . . To our future procur-
eur-général!! . . . etc., etc.

*[They touch glasses and drink to-
gether. JEAN shakes hands all
round and thanks them; then when
the noise has subsided.]*

ANOTHER GUEST

[Rising.] Since we have just evoked
the memory of this long lineage of magis-
trates, let us take advantage of the happy
occasion that brings us together under
this ancient roof, to make their better
acquaintance. There they all are, ranged
around this hall, and looking down upon

The Power of the Dead

us with a somewhat disturbing air. . . .
Some of them even don't look too well
pleased. . . . [*Hesitating laughter.*]
We are here in the museum, in the temple,
what do I say? . . . in the very holy
of holies of Justice herself; and if
I had not a conscience profoundly
at rest, I would feel uneasy enough. . . .
[*Laughter.*] My old friend, Jean d'Ypermonde
will I am sure, allow me, without
for one moment failing in the respect
I owe them, to point out to him that
the majority of his ancestors do not display
in their faces the joviality that habitually
radiates from his own. . . .
[*Laughter.*] There is more than one
among them that we should be very sorry
to find behind the green table of the
police court or dressed up in the red gown
of the procureur du roi, if one of us had
anything on his mind. . . . [*Laughter.*]

The Power of the Dead

Every one of these magistrates, I have no shadow of doubt, and we all know full well, were models of integrity and uprightness; but it is quite certain that they look pretty severe and display frowning countenances that are far from engaging. . . . [*Laughter.*] Just look for example at the one opposite me; does n't he remind you in a striking fashion—I don't mean to be unpleasant—of the portrait of the Duke of Alba in the Brussels Museum?

ANOTHER GUEST

And the one on the left, who looks as if he was turning his head away in disgust! . . .

ANOTHER GUEST

And the other one, on the right, with his air of a sly, furry old tom-cat!

The Power of the Dead

ANOTHER GUEST

I'm going to drink the health of the one who looks as if he was sipping vinegar! . . .

ANOTHER GUEST

And I drink to the one with the face of a miser, for that's probably the fellow to whom we owe the oldest bottles of these wonderful vintages we are enjoying to-night! . . .

JEAN

*[Rising to his feet, pale, indignant,
and breaking his glass with a sharp
blow on the table.]*

That will do!

A GUEST

What is it?

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

That will do, I tell you! . . . Anything you like as far as I'm concerned myself, but when it's about them it is quite another matter! . . . I will not allow anybody to touch them or to fail in respect to them under their own roof! . . .

PIERRE

Come now, Jean, you are making too much of it. . . . No one dreams of failing in respect. . . . We are all friends together, and these are just harmless jokes. . . .

JEAN

They are jokes that should not be made when they deal with the dead, and especially such dead as these. . . . I have mine, you have your own; let us learn to

The Power of the Dead

show them due honour. . . . It is they that have made us what we are, and we exist only through them! . . . Not only are we what they were, we are nothing more, nothing else than what they continue to be! . . . Death has not carried them far away from us; he has planted them within us! . . . And now it is within us that they are, within us that they exist and have their being, and we are nothing but their shadows. . . . They are greater and more truly alive than we are! . . . When we forget them, it is our whole future that we lose sight of; and when we fail in respect to them it is our own immortal soul that we are trampling under our own feet! . . . There is nothing we possess that they did not give, that they do not continue to give us untiringly, unremittingly. Everything that remains within us of justice, upright-

The Power of the Dead

ness, and honour, everything that in our idle, petty, useless lives still keeps us within the ranks of men, it is to them we owe it! I pity those of you who do not grasp this truth; I turn toward those whom they have insulted; and with profound obeisance before their invisible presence I beg their pardon.

ONE OF THE GUESTS

[*After a silence.*] Let us all beg their pardon!

[*They all rise up and bow, silently.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

The same scene. The table is still in the disorder that comes at the end of a festive evening. JEAN is alone, crumpled up in sleep in the depths of an arm-chair. Suddenly he seems to wake up, and sees before him DADDY MEYER, the money-lender, who is paralyzed in the left arm and under the right clutches a voluminous portfolio of buff leather.

ACT II

SCENE I

[JEAN; THE MONEY-LENDER.]

JEAN

[*Waking up with a start.*] You! . . .
You here! . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Yes, indeed Monsieur Jean, just as you see; it's your old friend, Daddy Meyer! . . .

JEAN

How did you get in? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

It was n't particularly easy, Monsieur Jean, it was n't particularly easy at all. . . . Everybody in the château has gone

The Power of the Dead

to bed, the great door was shut, and it was no use my knocking, nobody answered. . . . And then, by dint of ferreting about, in the long run I came upon a little servants' entrance that had been left ajar; I came inside, I threaded my way through long underground passages where I all but lost my way, and at last, in the end, here I am, at your service, Monsieur Jean.

JEAN

What do you want? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

The pleasure of seeing you as soon as possible, Monsieur Jean, the pleasure of seeing you as soon as possible; is n't that quite sufficient? . . . You did n't inform me of your return, Monsieur Jean, not that I mean to reproach you! . . .

The Power of the Dead

Luckily Daddy Meyer has a memory in his heart and knows everything that goes on, luckily, luckily! . . . I knew at once that I owed you this visit, Monsieur Jean; I took advantage of the opportunity to bring you certain little papers. . . .

JEAN

So be it; since you are there in any case, we might as well go through with it at once . . . how do we stand?

THE MONEY-LENDER

[Fumbling in his portfolio and pulling out of it a long sheet of paper covered with figures.] First of all here are the accounts relating to . . .

JEAN

No details, please, for the moment. Leave those papers with me, and I will look at the figures at my leisure. . . .

The Power of the Dead

What I want to know is the position in a nutshell; how do I stand and what is the amount I owe you? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

The position as a whole is not bad, Monsieur Jean; it is not at all bad. . . . When everything is cleared up, you won't owe me anything at all. And perhaps even there might be a little surplus; that will depend on the sales. . . .

JEAN

When everything is settled up? . . .
What do you mean? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

You are a doctor of laws, Monsieur Jean. You know just as well as myself, only a poor business agent with no education; you know as well as I do what I

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mean. . . . I mean, Monsieur Jean, that when the mortgages on the farms and on the château are realized. . . .

JEAN

You can do just whatever you please; but I shall never consent to the sale of the château.

THE MONEY-LENDER

But it is n't me myself that will have it sold, Monsieur Jean! . . . If it only depended on me, Monsieur Jean, you would n't have the slightest trouble! . . . But you understand, Monsieur Jean, it is n't with my own money only that I can carry on all the business I do and come to the rescue of my young friends. . . . I am not a rich man; indeed I'm not. . . . I lend money that I have to borrow; I'm only a poor intermediary; and the people

The Power of the Dead

who lend to me have n't good kind hearts like me, and never allow themselves to be softened. . . .

JEAN

We might get them to be patient; we could sell off a part of the assets, and give them a substantial payment on account. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

That's just what I've been breaking my neck to tell them, Monsieur Jean, just what I've been breaking my neck to tell them. . . . Believe me, Daddy Meyer has done his best. . . . They won't listen to anything; they want to make an end of the business. . . . One of them specially, the principal one, needs funds, it seems, and intends to realize at all costs. . . . But all is not lost; there is still a hope left . . .

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

What hope is that? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Daddy Meyer is watching over you, Monsieur Jean; Daddy Meyer is watching over you. . . . [*Drawing a paper from the portfolio and handing it to Jean.*] Do you know this, Monsieur Jean?

JEAN

[*Examining the paper.*] What is this? . . . A photograph of my father's will! . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

I see I have n't been deceived and that it is correct, Monsieur Jean. . . .

JEAN

[*Stupefied.*] How do you come to

The Power of the Dead

have this photograph? . . . I am the only person who knows of the existence of this will, the only person who has ever had it in his hands; and nobody in the world has ever seen it but me! . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Now and then we leave important papers lying about, Monsieur Jean. . . . It is n't every drawer that locks, and Daddy Meyer is watching over his clients. . . . Would you like to put it alongside the original, Monsieur Jean?

JEAN

Is is n't worth while; the original is in a sure place.

THE MONEY-LENDER

I know that, Monsieur Jean, I know that; it is n't very far from here, either,

The Power of the Dead

in the safe built into the wall and hidden behind that tapestry.

JEAN

How do you know that? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Daddy Meyer knows many a thing, Monsieur Jean; Daddy Meyer knows many a thing. . . . That is why it is a good thing to listen to him and to follow his advice. . . . Would you be so good as to get the original out of the safe, Monsieur Jean? . . .

JEAN

What for?

THE MONEY-LENDER

You ought never to say "What for?" Monsieur Jean; you ought never to say

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"what for." . . . You ought to treat serious matters seriously, take all proper and desirable precautions, and only take authentic documents into account; you know that just as well as I do, Monsieur Jean. . . .

[JEAN *lifts up the tapestry, opens the safe, takes out the will, and hands it to the MONEY-LENDER.*]

JEAN

Here it is; what do you intend to do with it? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Merely to show you written in your noble father's own handwriting, Monsieur Jean, the clause that is of the most interest to us at the present moment, and that may save all yet. . . . Let us see, let us see. . . . [*reading.*] "I bequeath to

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my godson" . . . "Item, to the alms-houses of Ypermonde" . . . That's not it yet. . . . Ah! this time we've got it! Here is the codicil: "To my son Jean: Jean, you will find among my personal effects, under separate cover . . ."

JEAN

You need n't read it; I know perfectly well . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

It's always a good thing to refresh one's memory, Monsieur Jean; it's always a good thing to refresh one's memory. . . . "You will find under separate cover, in state bonds, a sum of five hundred thousand francs, which was entrusted to me by a person who wishes to remain unknown. The said sum is by way of restitution, and represents as nearly as pos-

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sible the righting of an unintentional wrong, done long ago to the late Madame Claire Le Moyne, *née* Claire de Tracy, the second wife of Monsieur Joseph Le Moyne and mother of Jalline Le Moyne. On Mademoiselle Jalline's coming of age, you are to place in her hands this sum with the accrued interest, revealing to her alone and to no other person—I insist upon this point—the origin of these mon-
eys. This is a sacred charge which I entrust to your honour, the honour of the d'Ypermondes; to say more would be an insult to you." The bonds are still in your strong box, Monsieur Jean? . . .

JEAN

What do you take me for? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

For what you really are, Monsieur

The Power of the Dead

Jean, the most honourable man in the world, but the most embarrassed. . . . I know well enough that they are still in the box; and that is why I am about to propose to you, if you will allow me, a very simple and altogether honourable and honest way of getting out of your troubles and saving your château. . . .

JEAN

I don't see what the connection is. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

You shall see directly, Monsieur Jean; you shall see directly. . . . Everybody in the country knows, for it is no secret from anybody any longer, that you are the fortunate man who is betrothed to Mademoiselle Jalline and that you are to marry her very soon. . . .

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

That concerns nobody but her and me. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Quite so, Monsieur Jean; quite so. . . . I only wanted to say this much to you: nobody else but yourself and myself, I swear to it on the head of my only son, knows so much as the existence of this codicil. Now, as you are about to marry Mademoiselle Jalline, your two fortunes will be joined together and will henceforth be only one fortune, if you like, and if you are careful to take the proper precautions that prudence demands with regard to the marriage contract. It follows, therefore, that whether you hand over to her these five hundred thousand francs or keep them to yourself, so as to

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save the château, it will come absolutely to the same thing, since in any case, after the marriage, either you or Mademoiselle Jalline would have been called on to devote all or part of this sum to ransoming the home of your forefathers, to which she is no less attached than you are. You see, therefore, that you would be doing her no wrong; nay, on the contrary, for, as time goes on, the interests on the mortgages and other interests, which are very heavy, continue to run, and the money they absorb is hers since it is to be yours. . . .

JEAN

Out of my sight! . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

I will go, Monsieur Jean; I will go whenever you like. . . . I only ask for

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another moment, as I have not finished. . . .

JEAN

Go, I tell you, and give me back that will. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

I ask nothing better than to give it back to you, Monsieur Jean; I ask nothing better than to give it back to you; but in the mean time allow me to place it on this table between us, and at your disposal; and you will see in a moment whether it is not to your interest to let it be forgotten or to entrust it to me. [*Fumbling in his portfolio.*] I have still some other little papers that may interest you. . . . Do you know this one? . . .

JEAN

[*Putting out his hand to take the paper.*] Let me see. . . .

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THE MONEY-LENDER

[*Not letting go his hold of the paper which he places under JEAN's eyes.*] Allow me, Monsieur Jean, allow me; it is very interesting; it is extremely interesting. . . . This is just a little bill for twenty-five thousand francs that carries the signature of Monsieur Jean d'Ypermonde and the acceptance of your humble servant Mathieu Meyer, an acceptance which the last mentioned gentleman has no recollection of having given. . . .

JEAN

[*Drawing himself up in indignation.*] What does that mean? . . . You, you who know me, you would dare to insinuate that I have imitated your signature and that I have committed a forgery. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Be calm, Monsieur Jean, be calm.

The Power of the Dead

. . . I am making no insinuation at all; I am simply averring that my signature—which I did not place there—is on this paper, and that there is nobody except you and myself, and me less than anybody else, who had any interest in counterfeiting it. . . . If this little paper fell into the hands of any malevolent person, it might prove the beginning of very serious trouble for you, Monsieur Jean. It is a lucky thing that it is in my hands, and that everything can be arranged between us. . . .

JEAN

I don't understand. . . . Let me look at it a little nearer.

THE MONEY-LENDER

Here it is, Monsieur Jean. . . . Don't be afraid; it has been photographed, too.

The Power of the Dead

. . . It is your very own writing and your signature, Monsieur Jean.

JEAN

At any rate, they are a marvellous imitation.

THE MONEY-LENDER

You see, Monsieur Jean, there's no possibility of doubting any longer.

JEAN

[*Bewildered, with his head in his hands.*] I don't know how that paper ever came out of my hands. . . . I am only sure of one thing, and that is that whatever imprudences and mistakes I have committed, I've never been guilty of a forgery! . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

We don't always recall very clearly

The Power of the Dead

what we have done, Monsieur Jean; and sometimes a mere intention finds itself accomplished without our suspecting it.

JEAN

But, at any rate, unless a man is completely out of his mind, he knows what he has done or what he hasn't done.

THE MONEY-LENDER

Not always, Monsieur Jean, not always. . . . We have all made little mistakes of this kind. . . . Don't strike yourself, Monsieur Jean. . . . In any case, I am taking the bill away with me. Perhaps I would do well to put the will with it as well; it makes it safer. . . .

[As he is putting the will into his portfolio he watches Jean out of the corner of his eye, but Jean makes no movement.]

The Power of the Dead

It has no further interest for you, since all the bequests have been carried out and you are legally the universal legatee. Come and see me to-morrow, Monsieur Jean, when you are calmer; come and see me to-morrow; believe me, that will be best for you. . . . You will see that everything will work out to everybody's satisfaction, Monsieur Jean, and that the honour of the d'Ypermondes, which is no less dear to me than it is to you, Monsieur Jean, will not be compromised. . . . And now would you do me a great favour, Monsieur Jean? Will you be so kind as to help me to find my way again through the maze of corridors and passages that lead to the little servants' door by which I came in. . . . I thought I would never get out of them in my lifetime. . . . Will you please go in front, Monsieur Jean? I will follow you at your heels.

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[*Mechanically* JEAN takes up a candlestick and a heavy bunch of keys from the table, and goes out on the left through the door beside the fireplace, followed by THE MONEY-LENDER.]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The stage represents a narrow, low, vaulted corridor. On the left the corridor is closed by an iron door standing straight across it. Also to the left of the stage, two or three yards from the iron door, in the wall that forms the back of the corridor, there is another door, small, low, and rounded. The upper part of this door, set with iron bars close together, grudgingly allows the light from outside to strain through. It is supposed to open directly on the river that flows just below. Enter, on the right, THE MONEY-LENDER

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followed by JEAN carrying a candlestick and a bunch of keys. When THE MONEY-LENDER reaches the little rounded door that gives on the river, JEAN, intending to take his keys in his right hand to open the door at the end of the passage, slips, staggers, and drops the light, which goes out. THE MONEY-LENDER, in a panic, imagines that he is being attacked, tries to escape, drops his portfolio, and catching sight of the glimmer of light from the little barred door, flings himself at this door and thrusts violently against it. It gives way and opens, and the bright moonlight floods the opening and the corridor. JEAN cries out in dismay, "Be careful! . . . The river!" . . . Already it is too late; THE MONEY-LENDER has fallen, but

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with his right hand, the only sound one, he has clutched an iron bar which strengthens the door frame a few inches above the ground. His body has disappeared, and there is nothing to be seen now except that huge clenching hand, on which all the lighting should be concentrated. JEAN stands motionless, as though star-struck, staring at the convulsions of that tragic hand as they weaken little by little, while THE MONEY-LENDER cries out in desperation, "Jean! Jean! Help! I can't hold on any longer. . . . I'm falling! . . . Jean! . . . Jean! . . . Give me your hand! . . . I give up everything! . . . Your hand! Your hand! . . . I'm falling! . . . Murder! Murder! . . . My curse, my curse, my curse on you!" At length the

The Power of the Dead

hand lets go, THE MONEY-LENDER falls into the river, and the water leaps up on the threshold and splashes JEAN's face. JEAN, in a daze, mechanically picks up the portfolio, the candlestick, and the keys, shuts the door again, and withdraws, fumbling his way through the darkness.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The great hall of the château. JEAN, all agitated, bewildered, tottering, comes back into the hall by the door to the left of the fireplace. Mechanically he sets down the extinguished candle and THE MONEY-LENDER'S portfolio upon the table, but keeps the bunch of keys. Distractedly he looks round him, and, not knowing what to do, he strikes a bell, and presses on a button to call the servants. Distant ringing is heard in various places, then the sound of footsteps, then the old maître d'hôtel and the two old serving-women open, one

The Power of the Dead

after another, the three doors in the background and come hurrying up to their master.

JACQUES

Monsieur Jean! . . . Monsieur Jean!
. . . What is it? . . .

JEAN

You have n't heard anything? . . .

JACQUES

Heard what, Monsieur Jean?

JEAN

And you, Tonia?

TONIA

Excuse me, Monsieur Jean; I have n't heard anything. And yet I'm a very light sleeper.

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JEAN

And Thécla.

THÉCLA

Not as much as the cheep of a mouse, Monsieur Jean, and yet I was n't asleep at all, thanks to my rheumatics that are giving me a bad time to-night. . . .

JEAN

[*Speaking with difficulty.*] It is n't anything! . . . It's nothing at all . . . I had fallen asleep in that arm-chair, there, in the arm-chair you see over there. . . . I thought I heard a cry, a loud cry, and then the noise of something falling into the river. . . . I woke up with a start. . . . I thought some one was getting into the château. . . . But it's nothing, nothing at all; I must just have been dreaming.

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JACQUES

Would you like me to go round, Monsieur Jean. . . . I will go and get my revolver. . . .

JEAN

No, no, it is n't worth while. . . . Nobody could get inside here. . . . It was just a bad dream, I'm quite sure of it now; just a bad dream. . . .

THÉCLA

You are not ill, Monsieur Jean; you are pale. . . .

JEAN

No, no, my good Thécla; it's nothing, nothing at all. . . . Just a nightmare. . . . I paid too much honour to Tonia's excellent cooking; that's all. . . . Thank you, my dear friends; leave me now, and

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go and rest; you need it and so do I. . . .
Good night, good night, and be sure you
don't have bad dreams . . . like your
poor master. . . .

The servants withdraw through the doors at the back, shutting them as they go. JEAN is left alone in the middle of the hall. It seems to him that the atmosphere in it has suddenly changed. The great pendulum of the tall grandfather clock stops; the flames of the hearth-place stand up and seem to become fixed; the lights grow pale and go out. Frightened, JEAN strikes again and again on the bell, which only gives out a dull stifled, wadded sound, as if it had suddenly been cracked. He presses the electric buttons, but no ringing

The Power of the Dead

is heard in response. The three doors at the back open slowly, but no one makes his appearance. Distracted, he runs to these doors, calls, stares into the vacant spaces, and tries to cross the threshold, but the doors shut themselves irresistibly and silently. JEAN comes back to the middle of the hall and sinks down upon a stool, casting frightened looks around him. The marble busts are no longer on their pedestals. The model of his father's statue, half opening up its covering veils, which fall to the ground, and clad in the long magistrate's robe, comes forward towards the middle of the hall, surrounded, as it seems, with vague, indistinct, visionary presences that people the whole back

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of the room. JEAN stands up, draws back step by step, as though thrust back by some invisible power, tries to speak, but cannot utter a sound out of his throat. He throws himself on his knees, prostrates himself, raises his head, and always finds once more the inexorable vision advancing upon him. JEAN implores, supplicates with hands raised in prayer; the vision says "No" with his head; and, supersaturated with terror, hiding his face behind his arms, JEAN recoils as far as the door, passing through it in a spurt of flight, and the door shuts itself on him, dropping its iron bars with a crash, while the bolts slide home of themselves, as though to seal it against him for ever.

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE I

At the back, as far from the front as possible, and occupying the whole width of the stage, the Château d'Ypermonde. The main part of the château, which is set back from the rest, is made up of a long hall dating from the fifteenth century, of one story, covered with a broad slated roof and pierced with six tall Gothic windows, fitted with shutters, which are open when the curtain goes up. Between the third window and the fourth, and dividing the windows into two groups

The Power of the Dead

of three, and under a vaulting that is Gothic like the windows, there is an enormous door with two leaves all furnished with heavy ironwork. This is the main entrance to the château. It is approached by means of a bridge, sloped upwards—in olden days this was a drawbridge—which spans the river that bathes the foot of the walls. On the left, under the last window, and about the height of a man from the ground, there is a small barred room, accessible in case of need from outside by means of a projection of the wall that forms the plinth-course of the château. The whole building up to the very roof is covered with ivy. On the right, and forming a projection from the main building, a pavilion two stories high, of which there can be seen only

The Power of the Dead

part of the toothed gable. To the left, making a similar projection, a Flemish tower of the sixteenth century, crowning a fore part of the building, of which in the same way only a part is to be seen. In the foreground is the edge of a raised walk in front of a terrace adorned with yew-trees and bushes clipped into shapes.

The scenery should, by means of turrets and gables shown in perspective, give the impression that only a part of the château is in sight, and that other buildings stretch away behind the main façade.

When the curtain goes up, the château is lying under a flood of moonlight. JEAN is seen, beglamoured, thrust forth by what seems an irresistible force, coming out

The Power of the Dead

through the central door, which slowly, irrevocably, shuts upon him. All the lighted windows are extinguished, one by one, and all the shutters swing into place noiselessly, as though to close a tomb. The smoke that was rising from the chimneys suddenly stops. JEAN comes with unsteady steps down the slope of the bridge; then when he has reached the foot he hesitates, changes his mind, walks up again, goes to the great door, and tries to reopen it by the help of the keys from the bunch he is still holding in his hand. After vain attempts he gives it up, glides softly along the side of the wall, on the little narrow ledge formed by the plinth-course of the building, tries to open the shutters of the windows, meets with similar failure in this, and

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at last, exasperated, and in despair, he tries to clamber up to the little barred door. He misses his hold and all but falls into the river, but recovers himself by one of the bars, utters a cry of pain, and perceives that he has sprained his foot. For a moment he stands paralyzed, and then painfully hobbles back to the bridge, drags himself down the slope to the terrace, where he lies down among the bushes.

He remains there for a few seconds, dumfounded, moaning in a low tone, when he hears the sound of footsteps. He half rises up and calls into the night.

JEAN

Who is there? . . .

The Power of the Dead

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Who is calling? . . . Where are you?

JEAN

Here! . . . I am hurt.

[*Enter JALLINE from the right.*]

JALLINE

[*Recognizing* JEAN.] Jean! . . .
it is you!

JEAN

Jalline! . . .

JALLINE

[*Rushing up to him.*] Jean! . . .
Jean! . . . My own Jean! . . . What is
it? . . . What have you done? . . .
[*Taking him in her arms.*] Are you
hurt? . . . Are you in pain? . . . You
are pale! . . . What has happened? . . .

The Power of the Dead

What is it? . . . Jean! . . . Jean! . . .
It is n't anything very serious, is it?
. . . Where are you hurt? . . . Tell
me what it is. . . . Jean. . . . Jean
. . . . I will call out for help. . . .

JEAN

No, no, it is n't anything. . . . Don't
call out; it's really nothing. . . . I've
just simply sprained my foot.

JALLINE

My Jean, my poor Jean! . . . But you
can't possibly stay here. . . . Come and
lean on me; I'm strong, you know. . . .
I will help you to walk; you must get in-
doors again; it is n't so very far. . . .

JEAN

No, no, I can't do that. . . . I won't
do that. . . .

The Power of the Dead

JALLINE

But what has happened? . . . Why are you so late in coming? . . . I have been waiting nearly an hour for you now. . . .

JEAN

Ah, I must tell you. . . . Has Pierre been talking to you? . . .

JALLINE

Yes, indeed, my poor Jean; we have both been having a good laugh together. . . . It's all so ridiculous. . . . And that was why you didn't come, was it?

JEAN

No, no, I'll tell you. . . . I wanted to see you again; and then I meant to wake up the chauffeur and order the car. . . . I had to be in Brussels to-morrow morning very

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early, for some urgent business. . . . I had barely left the house when I perceived that I had forgotten a portfolio that contained important papers. . . . I went to go indoors again and in my hurry I stumbled and sprained my foot. . . .

And there you are . . . you see it is really nothing. . . . That's all that is the matter. . . . Nothing has happened out of the ordinary, I swear to you. . . . But this forgotten portfolio is a great nuisance for me; it might fall into the hands of some of the servants; and it contains papers which it would be better they should n't know about.

JALLINE

Is that all, my poor Jean? Would you like me to go in and fetch it? . . .

The Power of the Dead

Where is it exactly, this portfolio that is worrying you so dreadfully?

JEAN

What, Jalline, you would do this? . . .

JALLINE

Indeed, yes, and why not? . . . It's not very difficult; I know the house quite as well as you do. . . . But what is the matter with you? . . . You are looking at me as if I was about to perform some miracle. . . .

JEAN

No, no, it's nothing . . . don't take any notice; it's just the shock of my tumble. . . . The portfolio is on the table, on the right, near the third window. . . . It's a big portfolio of yellow leather . . . there's a name on it, not

The Power of the Dead

my name. . . . But you will never be able to see inside there. . . . Wait; I've got some matches. . . . Here they are. . . . You will find candles in the antechamber, to the left of the door.

JALLINE

I know, I know. . . . Are all the servants in bed?

JEAN

Long ago. . . . I was all alone. . . . Here is the key of the great door. . . . You're not afraid?

JALLINE

No, indeed. . . . What should I be afraid of? Stay here, and don't move an inch; I'll be back in a moment.

[JALLINE *moves away swiftly.*

When she gets to the middle of

The Power of the Dead

the bridge, JEAN calls her back, in great distress.]

JEAN

Jalline! . . .

JALLINE

[*Turning round.*] Jean? . . .

JEAN

Don't go in there!

JALLINE

Why not?

JEAN

I don't know if you 'll be able to get in.

JALLINE

Why should n't I? . . . I've got the key. . . .

The Power of the Dead

[JALLINE reaches the doorway, puts the key into the keyhole, pushes the right-hand door, which yields without an effort and shuts again after her. JEAN is drawn up, leaning on his hands, following all her movements with anxious distress. Light is seen filtering through the slits and the openings in the shutters, in such a way that we can follow JALLINE as she walks about inside the house. Seconds pass, while JEAN counts them, with straining eyes, all the time making little instinctive movements to go to the assistance of his betrothed, whom he believes to be in danger of death. At last the door opens, and JALLINE appears once more on the threshold, the portfolio in her hand. In her

The Power of the Dead

*haste she forgets to shut the door,
hurries lightly down the slope and
comes up to JEAN again.]*

JEAN

Oh! Jalline, Jalline! . . . You don't
know! . . . You saw nothing at all! . . .

JALLINE

Saw what? . . .

JEAN

You did n't meet anybody? . . .

JALLINE

Of course I did n't, since there is n't
anybody there.

JEAN

*[Looking across and pointing to the
door, which is shutting itself.]* The
door! . . . Look at the door. . . .

The Power of the Dead

JALLINE

That's true. . . . I've forgotten to
shut it again. . . .

JEAN

It is shutting of itself.

JALLINE

Oh, it's the wind. . . .

JEAN

There is n't any wind . . . there's
not a leaf stirring.

JALLINE

[*Holding out the portfolio to him, with
a smile.*] Anyhow, here is the portfolio.
. . . It's the right one, is n't it? . . .
[*Observing the name of Mathieu Meyer,
stamped on the corner of the portfolio.*]
But this is Mathieu Meyer's portfolio
. . . the old money-lender!

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

Yes! . . .

JALLINE

Are you still mixed up with that wretched creature? . . . I had heard as much. . . . Do take care; he will ruin you as he has ruined so many others.

JEAN

I must indeed! . . . But don't tell anybody you have seen this portfolio in my hands. . . . My life depends on it. . . .

JALLINE

Your life! . . .

JEAN

Yes, my life . . . there is a rumour that something has happened to the money-lender. . . . It was bound to

The Power of the Dead

come . . . he has made too many people his victims. . . . But if it was known that his portfolio was at my house, I would be accused of it and I should be lost. . . .

JALLINE

[*Touched by some suspicion.*] Jean?
. . . [*She looks long and searchingly at him.*]

JEAN

No! Jalline, Jalline! . . . No, no, it was n't I who did it! . . . I will tell you everything! . . . Oh, Jalline, I have been so unhappy for a long time. . . . I was that man's plaything. . . . He came to threaten me in my own house. . . . It seems he had got hold of some papers, I don't know how, that I had never signed, and which were enough to ruin me. . . . He meant to blackmail me till I was bled

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to death. . . . I turned him out. . . .
As I was all alone, I showed him the way out myself, through the passage, you know, that runs along by the river. . . . When we came to the door at the end of the passage that leads through into the kitchens, just as I was taking the key to open it, my foot slipped. . . . There was water lying on the floor. . . . I dropped the candlestick that was giving us light. . . . We were left completely in the dark. . . . He was afraid; he lost his head in the darkness. . . . No doubt he imagined that I had done it on purpose and that I had designs on his life. . . . Before I could stop him, he pushed at the little barred door, the one you see there, that opens directly on to the river. . . . It all happened in the flash of an eye. . . . He fell. . . . He hung for a moment clutching with his right hand—the other one,

The Power of the Dead

you know, is paralyzed—to an iron bar at the foot of the door. . . . And before I had time to help him, before I could even think of holding out a hand to him, because I was so stupefied with astonishment, he had let go and fallen into the river! . . . And the stream carried him away with it. . . . I never saw him again. . . . Oh! . . . Jalline, Jalline! . . . I swear to you that it was n't my fault! . . . I did all I could . . . but it was too late. . . .

JALLINE

How do you come to have his portfolio? . . .

JEAN

I don't know. . . . He had it under his arm. . . . He let it drop. . . . I must have picked it up quite mechanically.

The Power of the Dead

. . . Oh! . . . Jalline, Jalline! . . .
[*He falls sobbing into JALLINE's
arms.*]

JALLINE

Jean! . . .

JEAN

Jalline! . . .

JALLINE

Look at me, Jean. . . . That's the
whole real truth? . . .

JEAN

Oh, Jalline! . . . my own Jalline!
. . . Upon our love, Jalline, the love I
am no longer worthy of! On my father's
honour! . . .

[*The door of the château opens and
shuts again; JEAN observes it,*

The Power of the Dead

draws himself up, and cries out as if he was addressing some vision.]

Yes, yes, upon the honour of my father, I swear it, I know it! . . . I don't know how it all happened; I no longer know anything of what is happening; it is dreadful, but I am innocent! . . .

[He falls back once more sobbing into JALLINE'S arms.]

JALLINE

Yes, yes . . . be calm, Jean, my poor Jean. . . . I could see it in your eyes. . . . I believe you. . . .

JEAN

Oh! Jalline! . . . You, at any rate! . . . That is enough for me, and it is everything, too! . . . I have nothing but you now! . . . If I had n't got you! . . . They are all against me! . . . They

The Power of the Dead

won't have me any more! . . . They are driving me out like a mad dog! . . . They are all wrong! . . . They are all wrong. . . . People say they know everything! . . . It's not true! . . . It's not true! . . . They cannot understand the living now! . . . They don't know. Jalline! They did not see! . . . they did not see! . . . Don't leave me, Jalline! . . . Jalline, be sure you don't leave me, or I shall go mad! . . .

JALLINE

[*Caressing his forehead.*] No, no, Jean! you can be at rest; I won't leave you. . . . My own Jean, my poor Jean, your Jalline is not one of the creatures that slip away when misfortune comes. . . . The others don't know; the others don't love you. . . . I am sure that my own Jean could do nothing really bad, has

The Power of the Dead

never done anything really bad. . . . He was just a little boy when I knew him first; I was far littler than he was, and I know he has never done any harm to anybody. . . . It's a dreadful, dreadful thing, I know it is; but it is not your fault at all.

JEAN

[*Kissing her desperately.*] Jalline! . . .

JALLINE

[*Kissing him in turn.*] Don't be afraid any more, my little Jean, I am here. . . . Leave it to me, and don't say a word to anybody. . . . You simply don't know at this moment what you are saying, and you might ruin yourself. . . . You must get back your balance and be composed.

The Power of the Dead

. . . Does any one know that he came to see you? . . .

JEAN

I don't think so. . . .

JALLINE

Did anybody see him? . . . Who opened the door for him? . . . The servants?

JEAN

No, the servants were in bed. . . . I don't know how he came in. . . . By a servants' door that had been left open; that is what he told me. . . .

JALLINE

Give me the portfolio.

JEAN

Why? . . .

The Power of the Dead

JALLINE

If anybody is suspicious, if there is a search or inquiry at your house, and if the portfolio is found there, that will be taken for clear proof against you, and you will be lost. . . . I will take it, and I will hide it at home, for nobody will think of coming there. Unless you might like better to fling it into the river? . . .

JEAN

No, no, not that. . . . That would be really dangerous . . . it would be found. . . . It contains papers that I need and that would be enough to ruin me. . . .

JALLINE

I will keep it then, and I will hide it safe, don't be afraid. . . . And now, my Jean, make an effort. . . . I shall help

The Power of the Dead

you. . . . You must go back into the house. . . .

JEAN

Go back . . . where? . . .

JALLINE

Into your house . . . come, it is n't a very long way.

JEAN

Into my own house . . . up there? . . . never! . . . I can't! . . .

JALLINE

But why, then, my own Jean? . . . That's just absurd. . . . Where would you like to go, then? . . .

JEAN

Anywhere in the world, wherever you like, no matter where, but there—never,

The Power of the Dead

never, after what they did to me! . . .

JALLINE

But they have n't done anything to you, my poor Jean; and nobody shall do anything to you. . . . Come now, don't strike yourself like that. . . . Come, come, I understand. Would you like to come to my house? . . . That's not very far, either. . . . We'll find Pierre there. . . . He has n't gone to bed yet. . . . He has taken his medical course . . . we will look after you well, and we'll forget everything about this. . . . Come, lean on me. . . . There is nothing to be afraid of when one is innocent.

[*They go off on the right, JEAN walking painfully, leaning on JALLINE's shoulder.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The office of THE EXAMINING MAGISTRATE. Very ordinary, commonplace furniture. A large table covered with a green cloth. Arm-chairs and chairs rather worn and faded. A cupboard with glass doors, a secretary, filing-cabinets, index-files, jackets, a few books, etc, etc.

On JEAN's entering the room, THE MAGISTRATE, who has been sitting at the middle of the table, the left-hand corner of which is taken up by the clerk, rises and bows.

The Power of the Dead

THE MAGISTRATE

Monsieur Jean d'Ypermonde. [*Waving him to a seat near the table.*] . . . Would you be good enough to sit down. . . . I knew your father very well, Monsieur Jean d'Ypermonde. . . . He was a great jurist, a great magistrate, and above all a great gentleman. . . . He was, in some ways, our conscience come to life and clothed in flesh; and his memory is far from having died out from among us. . . . I have taken the liberty of asking you to come to see me here in order to ask you, as a friend rather than as a magistrate, for certain details of information which you may perhaps be able to give me with reference to the accident—for we are still able to look upon it as no more than an accident—that has happened to a certain Mathieu Meyer, whom, it appears, you were acquainted with.

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

It is quite true, sir, that I have known him, and even known him all too well . . . just as many young men belonging to this town know him. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Ah, yes, I know; this Mathieu Meyer had the reputation of subsidizing young men whom he knew to be well off, but temporarily embarrassed for money, in consideration of a return that it seems was often a very inflated one. . . .

JEAN

Inflated, indeed; the word is not a bit too strong; and I know something of it by experience.

THE MAGISTRATE

I am of your opinion, but for the mo-

The Power of the Dead

ment we are not interested in that particular matter. . . . As you have perhaps already been informed, the body of this unfortunate Mathieu Meyer has just been found. . . .

JEAN

His body has been found? . . . Where has it been found? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

In the river. You know that the river, which, of course, bathes the wall of your château, passes at the foot of the house in which Mathieu Meyer lived. About fifteen yards or so up-stream there is a sluice, and it was at the gate of this sluice, almost under the wretched man's own windows, that the corpse was recovered from the water. It is possible to uphold the theory of an accident or suicide, if

The Power of the Dead

we must; but it is much more than probable that the old man, who must have had enemies, or at least clients who had an interest in his disappearance, has been murdered in his own house and afterwards thrown out of the window. I must state, to be strictly accurate, that no trace of any violence has been discovered on the body. But what gives some weight of credibility to the theory that for the moment I am accepting and that seems to me the most likely, is the condition in which we found the room that served the victim as a study or office. . . . You know this office, Monsieur d'Ypermonde? . . .

JEAN

I know it only too well, Monsieur le Juge. . . . I have spent more than one somewhat distressing moment in it, un-

The Power of the Dead

happily for the health of my poor purse.

THE MAGISTRATE

Well! . . . this office, which is known to you, has been found in a highly significant state of disorder, showing clearly that it had been the scene of a very violent struggle, or at any rate its condition is more than suspicious. A chair was overturned, the floor was strewn with papers, the cloth that covered the table was thrown over the inkstand, a drawer was open and seemed to have been ransacked, a pile of books had been knocked over, and so on. . . . In my opinion, the wretched man was taken by surprise from behind, and mastered in a trice, without being able to make any particular resistance, for, as you are aware, he was paralyzed in the left arm, stunned, and

The Power of the Dead

then flung into the river. In any case, the inquiry, which has barely been begun, will doubtless clear up all these points. . . . But here is something in which you might perhaps help me, and it is the reason why I asked you to come here. . . . There has been found on the carpet of the room in question a glass from a pair of eye-glasses, of a rather special kind. [JEAN shivers. THE MAGISTRATE *notes this and goes on.*] You may be reassured; I know that you don't wear eye-glasses. This lens or this glass . . . here it is. . . . As you see, it has a double focus, and is hollowed in such a way as to permit the wearer to see at a distance or close at hand. . . . It has probably been broken in the struggle, but, as you can perceive, the two parts come together with perfect exactness. . . . Now this

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kind of lens, which is only of fairly recent invention, is as yet not very widely known. . . . I have been informed that one of your friends wore eye-glasses of this pattern; my informant could not be definite, I was not able to learn his name; otherwise I should not have taken the liberty of disturbing you, but would have summoned the gentleman in person. . . . Have you observed that any of your friends wore a pince-nez or spectacles fitted with glasses of this nature?

JEAN

Good heavens, monsieur, I left this neighbourhood now nearly four years ago, and during all those years I have hardly seen my friends in this part of the world at all; I am consequently very poorly posted as to the little infirmities of their

The Power of the Dead

eyesight; it would surely be an oculist or an optician who would be in a position to answer your query. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

You will please note that I am not asking you for this detail to invite you to play the informer against one or another of your friends: it is rather out of regard for them that I am taking this course so as to spare them, as far as possible, disagreeable cross-examinations or searches in their homes. . . . I am therefore obliged to follow up the first serious clue that presents itself, and am of course determined to follow it as far as it will lead me. . . . If circumstances force me to abandon these, there is still another left which I should be reluctant to take up save in the utmost extremity; and it

The Power of the Dead

is accordingly in your own interest that I beg you to facilitate my task.

JEAN

In my own interest? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Yes, for we know from another source that Mathieu Meyer went to the Château d'Ypermonde during the afternoon of the fifteenth or sixteenth of May, and does not appear to have returned from there alive.

JEAN

It is possible that he may have gone there; I know nothing as to that; but it is quite certain that I did not see him there. . . . Question my servants; they will only be able to confirm what I now affirm to you.

The Power of the Dead

THE MAGISTRATE

I do not doubt it in the slightest. . . . And so, to come back to our other line of inquiry, the most serious, and even the only really serious one up to the present,—for you will agree that there is a very grave presumption attached to the finding of the special lens, broken in the course of a struggle,—to come back to this clue, I will tell you that from the very outset my inquiry has given quite substantial results, and that the circle of presumptions, which at the outset included a certain number of your friends, is now narrowed down to two of them who, it appears, were pretty constant visitors to the money-lender's house; one of these gentlemen is a certain Philippe de Vrières, whom I do not know. . . . Does he as a general rule wear eye-glasses or spectacles? . . .

The Power of the Dead

JEAN

Not that I know of, at any rate I have never noticed. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

The other is Pierre Le Moyne.

JEAN

Pierre Le Moyne! . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Yes, the brother or the half-brother of Mademoiselle Jalline, who I believe. . . .

JEAN

But that's impossible! . . . Pierre Le Moyne has been my friend since we were children; he is the best, the gentlest, the most inoffensive being the earth has ever known; and I would answer for him as I would for myself. . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

I have not the least doubt of it . . .
but that is not the point at issue. . . . I
would merely like to know whether to
your knowledge he is in the habit of wear-
ing pince-nez. . . .

JEAN

That's a thing everybody knows, and
that is obvious to the eye. . . . I don't
see how it can be of any advantage that
I should be the person to confirm it. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Have you noticed the nature and pat-
tern of the lenses in his eye-glasses, and
whether they have a double focus, like
these? . . .

JEAN

On my word, Monsieur le Juge, I will

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confess to you that my attention has never been brought to bear on this point. . . . He will be able to inform you better than I can. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

You are right, indeed, and so I am about to beg him to call on me. . . . His father is away from home at the moment, I believe.

JEAN

Yes, he is taking a cure, somewhere in Switzerland, it appears; and Pierre is alone in the château with his sister, Mademoiselle Jalline.

THE MAGISTRATE

Good, I shall ask both of them to come. . . .

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JEAN

What? Mademoiselle Jalline as well?
I do not see how her presence can . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

You will allow me. . . . There is nothing seriously against my letting you know just where my inquiry has come to. On the fifteenth of May, the day of the accident, or the crime, old Meyer told his son of his quite definite intention to go and see you at the Château d'Ypermonde. The son left his father at five o'clock. Accordingly, one of two things happened: either Meyer went to your house in the evening or at night, and his fate came upon him in your house itself or somewhere in the neighbourhood of your house; or else, indeed, he did not carry out his intention to go to you, but remained at home, and so it was in his own

The Power of the Dead

house that he was murdered, in all likelihood by the person who left the fragment of his eye-glasses behind him. It now becomes necessary to discover what Pierre Le Moyne did between five and seven o'clock; for from seven o'clock until half-past nine he will be able to put forward an alibi which I already know of, since he was at your house. It becomes also necessary, on the other hand, to know what you did after nine o'clock at night; in other words, after your guests had left the château. Do you remember this? . . .

JEAN

Good God! . . . I can't remember it all exactly now. . . . I sat up for some time in an arm-chair, and then I went to bed. . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

Yes, you had a kind of nightmare, you fancied you heard a cry, you called your servants, they came hurrying down, nothing was discovered out of the ordinary, and you dismissed them again. . . . But after that, did you not go out of the house? . . .

JEAN

[*Hesitating.*] I? . . . No. . . . Ah! yes, perhaps I did. . . . I remember vaguely, my head was heavy . . . and I went out for a minute to get a little air. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Is that all? . . .

JEAN

That was all . . . at least, I think so . . . I don't remember. . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

It is strange that you should have forgotten what came after; for Mademoiselle Jalline's maid, who was uneasy or inquisitive because she had seen her mistress leave the château of the Le Moynes about half-past ten, saw her returning with you a little after eleven o'clock. You seemed to be walking with difficulty, just as you are to-day. . . . Mademoiselle Jalline was holding you up. Pierre Le Moyne was awakened, and he looked after you, and you spent the rest of the night at your friend's house. . . . Is that an exact account? . . .

JEAN

Absolutely. . . . I can see that you are excellently well informed. . . .

The Power of the Dead

THE MAGISTRATE

You see that it is not altogether without point that Mademoiselle Jalline should be present at the interview. . . . And now, Monsieur d'Ypermonde, would you be so kind as to do me the favour of going into the adjoining room and remaining there for a brief moment? . . .

JEAN

Is this an arrest or a detention? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Neither one nor the other, Monsieur d'Ypermonde; it is a simple favour I ask of you, to oblige me. . . . It is absolutely essential for the good order of the examination that the witnesses may not be in a position to influence one another; not that I have any doubts as to the innocence of Pierre Le Moyne or your own

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good faith, but it is a measure of precaution that I am obliged to take, and which I always take in order to safeguard my own responsibility. . . . Will you be good enough to come this way, Monsieur d'Ypermonde? You will find books, papers, and cigarettes. . . . And in any case I hope I shall not put your patience to any lengthy test.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The château seen from the outside. The same setting as in the first scene of this act. In the foreground, on the terrace with its trees and shrubs, there are a certain number of neighbours and inhabitants of the village, who are anxiously viewing the château, whispering, gathering in little groups, constantly in movement, coming and going, without venturing to cross an imaginary line they seem to have laid down. Among them can be observed JACQUES (the old maître d'hôtel) the old gardener and his grandchild LINETTE. Moon-

The Power of the Dead

light. All the doors and windows are shut; and the great house seems sealed like a tomb.

THE GARDENER

[*To JACQUES.*] Where is Monsieur Jean? . . .

JACQUES

At the examining magistrate's; an inquiry has been set on foot into what is going on. . . .

A NEIGHBOUR

[*Coming up to them.*] But what has happened? . . .

JACQUES

First of all, the body of the old money-lender Meyer has been found in the river.

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A NEIGHBOUR

I know, I know. . . . But the château?
. . . What has happened there? . . .
Why is it all shut up? . . . They are
saying it's haunted, that the dead have
thrust you outside, that no one can go into
it any more; it can't really be serious, all
this? . . . There must be something
else. . . .

JACQUES

Monsieur, I know nothing about the
whole thing. . . . I was in the château
with the two old servants, the nurse and
the cook. . . . We were sleeping peace-
fully, when they heard strange noises, so
it appears; they saw doors and windows
shutting of themselves; they even saw
shadows, according to what they say.
. . . They were afraid. . . . They were
just like mad women. . . . I went to look

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for Monsieur Jean. . . . I could n't find him; and upon my word I could not stay there alone, and I followed them. . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

Where are they, then, the old servants? . . .

JACQUES

They took refuge at the gardener's.
. . . They simply can't hold up any more.
. . . We are afraid for their wits.

THE NEIGHBOUR

Yes, it's most unlucky; but all that is not particularly serious; it's only old wives' tales. . . . But you are a sensible man and have got your wits about you like myself; have you seen anything out of the ordinary? . . .

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JACQUES

To say that I've seen something in the same way that I see you, monsieur, that would n't be true. . . . I have seen nothing; but I was n't able to stay in the house; it was too much for me altogether. . . .

ANOTHER NEIGHBOUR

It seems nobody can go into the château now at all.

THE FIRST NEIGHBOUR

That can't be really true! . . . [*To JACQUES.*] Have you tried? . . .

JACQUES

Yes! . . .

THE FIRST NEIGHBOUR

And you were n't able to? . . .

The Power of the Dead

JACQUES

I was n't able to. . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

Why not? . . .

JACQUES

I don't know why. . . . The door
won't open. . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

Have you the key?

JACQUES

Of course; here it is. . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

And it works freely in the lock? . . .

JACQUES

It moves to and fro freely and without
effort in the lock; but the door does not

The Power of the Dead

open. . . . It is just as if some one or something was pushing at it from inside.

THE NEIGHBOUR

But there is n't anybody. . . .

JACQUES

I know that perfectly well; but it's just as though there were several.

A NEIGHBOUR

It's absurd, and it's impossible. . . .
A house is either inhabited or it is not.
. . . There is some one, or there is no one. . . .

JACQUES

[*Offering him the key.*] Would you like to try, monsieur?

THE NEIGHBOUR

It has nothing to do with me. . . . I

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have no right to do such a thing. . . . In any case, the authorities have been informed, and the rest does n't concern us. . . .

THE GARDENER

[*Coming up and wagging his head.*] This is n't the first time that something uncanny has happened at the Château of Ypermonde. . . . [*Drawing them a little apart.*] Come over here; we must n't have everybody listening to this. . . . I mind my grandfather saying to me that before the Revolution in France the d'Ypermonde that was living in it then—that was the fourth bust in the hall, beginning from the left hand—I mind him saying that this d'Ypermonde, who had, it appears, given a judgment that was n't a just one, had had to abandon the old château along with everybody else that

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was living in it; and nobody had been able to set foot inside it till the magistrate had righted the wrong he had done to a family that is still living in the country; the Van Tilts is what they call themselves, and you know them, no doubt. . . .

THE NEIGHBOUR

The Van Tilts whose son has married the sister of Verhulst, the churchwarden? . . .

THE GARDENER

The very ones! . . . They don't remember it now . . . it's too long ago . . . but my grandfather, who had a marvellous memory for his age—he was eighty-three when he died—remembered very well, and he told me about it more than once. . . . They are people that can't bide any injustice, the d'Ypermondes.

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THE NEIGHBOUR

Aye, these are legends such as can be found a-lingering round every old château. . . . But how is it all going to end, and what do they mean to do? . . .

JACQUES

We are waiting for Monsieur Jean to come back. . . . [*Movements among the various groups, which break apart.*] Ah! . . . Here are the gendarmes! Sergeant Rodolphe with two of his men. . . . [*He goes forward to meet them.*]

THE SERGEANT

[*Shaking hands with JACQUES.*] Good evening, Monsieur Jacques! . . . I have had orders to make my way into the château. . . . Have you the keys? . . .

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JACQUES

Here is the key to the door, sergeant;
Monsieur Jean has the others. . . .

THE SERGEANT

I know; they have been handed over to
me. . . . Will you please come with me
to guide us a little in this château, as I
am not familiar with it? . . .

JACQUES

Excuse me, sergeant, but I can't do
that. . . .

THE SERGEANT

Why not? . . .

JACQUES

I don't know. . . . I cannot do it. . . .
Ask me to do anything, whatever you like,
but not that. . . .

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THE SERGEANT

What on earth is all this nonsense about? . . . Are you afraid? . . .

JACQUES

I am not afraid of anybody in this world, sergeant. . . . But it must be somebody belonging to this world. . . . It's too much for me; I can't do it. . . .

THE SERGEANT

It's idiotic nonsense! . . . Come on, will somebody who knows the château go up there with me?

[Silence. Nobody moves, and nobody makes any answer.]

But what is the matter with the whole lot of them?

THE GARDENER

[Coming up and tapping in a fatherly

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fashion on THE SERGEANT'S shoulder.]
A little bit of good advice for you: don't
you go up there yourself, either.

THE SERGEANT

The whole countryside has gone mad.
[*To his men.*] Now, then, come along,
you lads! We 'll show them what a gen-
darme is and what the force is!

[*He moves off, followed by his two
men. . . . They go forward up
the slope of the bridge. They are
almost at the great door. The
crowd in intense distress and
absolute silence follow them with
their eyes. THE SERGEANT turns
round and smilingly salutes them
with his hand. He puts the key
into the lock, turns it, turns it back
again; then with all his strength*

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he pushes at one of the leaves of the enormous door. His two men second his efforts to the best of their ability. The door seems to be giving way and yielding a little. Then, as if, through the narrow aperture that has been opened between the two leaves of the door, something had come forth, a breath, a warning, mysterious, chill, supernatural, terrifying, the men suddenly desist, look at one another, give up the attempt, and all pale and with agitated features they come back towards the crowd at a pace that all in vain tries to pretend not to be overprecipitate. The people flock around them.]

THE NEIGHBOUR

What is it, sergeant; what is it?

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THE SERGEANT

[*Struggling to assume a reassuring air.*]

Nothing, nothing! . . .

ANOTHER NEIGHBOUR

What did you see?

THE SERGEANT

Nothing, nothing, only. . . .

JACQUES

You are pale, sergeant. . . . Would you like a glass of water? . . .

THE SERGEANT

[*Rubbing at his cheeks.*] Me, pale? Not a bit of it! On the contrary. . . . And, anyway, leave me alone, and move along, you. . . . There is n't anything at all, only your door is no good. . . . It's in bad condition the whole thing! . . .

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You can't get inside. . . . There's something that prevents . . . it isn't anything, only you can't see a bit up there. . . . And, anyway, I know what I know, don't I? . . . We'll come back to-morrow, and so much the worse for anybody that is n't in line with the regulations.

THE NEIGHBOUR

Excuse me, sergeant, but you have left the key in the door. . . .

THE SERGEANT

I know, I know. . . . I've left it there on purpose. . . . I know what I'm doing. . . . Nobody will go and take it. . . . We will come back to-morrow, and, as I have said, those that aren't all in order had better look out. . . . I wash my hands of it as far as I'm concerned. . . . I only know my own orders. . . .

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[He goes out, followed by his two men. The crowd are more and more agitated. But during the time they have been occupied in this way with the gendarmes, LINETTE, the gardener's grandchild, who was straying about from group to group, playing games the while, has come up to the bridge. She has already reached the middle of the slope when she is caught sight of. At once they began to cry out to call her back: "Linette! . . . Linette! . . . Come back quickly. . . ." and so forth. She turns round, smiles, and then continues quietly moving on towards the door of the château. The crowd becomes excited, panic-stricken, but nobody dares to go as far as

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the bridge. They run to fetch the gardener, who has gone off with the gendarmes. Cries of "Her mother! her mother! where is her mother?" Some one goes and tells the mother, who, all haggard, dishevelled, half naked, exactly as she has jumped out of her bed, rushes forward and reaches the beginning of the bridge just as little LINETTE gets to the great door, which she pushes gently. The door opens; the child goes in; and the door shuts on her at the very moment the mother's hands fall on the leaves. The mother thrusts at it, strains against it, shrieks, sets furiously to work, batters it with fists and feet, bruises herself all to no purpose. She falls on the

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ground exhausted. The grandfather, who has run back, cleaves his way through the crowd in his turn, passes the bridge, struggles to open the door, and then lifts his daughter and carries her back towards the crowd in a swoon. Then, while they are all busied about the woman, who slowly comes back to her senses, the door of the château opens once more, the little girl appears on the threshold, comes forward, and smilingly trips down the sloping bridge, kissing her hand to the stupefied crowd, her arms laden with a huge sheaf of lilies, which she holds out to her mother, who kisses her in a kind of frenzy. The great door shuts again slowly.]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE I

[THE EXAMINING MAGISTRATE;
*The same setting as in Scene II of
Act III.*

[THE EXAMINING MAGISTRATE,
JALLINE; JEAN D'YPERMONDE;
PIERRE LE MOYNE; *the clerk; two
gendarmes.*]

THE MAGISTRATE

Mademoiselle, and Monsieur Pierre Le Moyne, I have asked you to come to see me in order that I might request of you to be good enough to complete certain information that Monsieur Jean d'Yper-

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monde has begun to give me with reference to the accident that has happened to Mathieu Meyer. . . .

PIERRE

Ah, yes, Monsieur le Juge; I have been told that the poor man's body had been found in the river. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Are you in the habit of wearing eye-glasses, Monsieur Le Moyne? . . .

PIERRE

I am obliged to, Monsieur le Juge. . . . Though I am not excessively shortsighted, my eyes are not very strong; and when I have to examine something or to read something at a certain distance I am forced to use my eye-glasses.

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THE MAGISTRATE

I have been informed that you were in the habit of using rather special lenses, with a double focus, so that you could see both near and at a distance. . . .

PIERRE

Yes, as a matter of fact, I did have eye-glasses fitted with lenses of the kind. . . . [*Taking them out of his pocket.*] Here they are. . . . Unfortunately, I have lost one of the lenses . . . and I had just put the frame in my pocket to take it to the optician to get a new one in its place. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Where do you think you lost it? . . .

PIERRE

Well, upon my word I have n't an idea.

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. . . I've racked my brains all to no purpose; I can't manage to remember. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

[*Opening a small box out of which he takes the broken lens.*] It is n't this one by any chance? . . . Would you mind just making sure about it? . . .

PIERRE

[*Examining the lens and fitting it into the frame.*] Why, of course it is! . . . It is, indeed! . . . No mistake about it! . . . I can see perfectly with it! . . . It must be exactly the same number! . . . How the devil has that lens got here? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

You are absolutely sure it is the lens belonging to your eye-glasses? . . .

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PIERRE

Not the least shadow of a doubt. . . .
My name might be engraved on the glass.
. . . But where was it found? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

When do you think you lost it? . . .

PIERRE

I must have lost it on the fifteenth, some time during the day. . . . I can remember that little point quite clearly, and my friend Jean d'Ypermonde will remember it, too. I was at his house, about seven in the evening; he showed me the model of his father's statue; I took out my glasses to examine it, and at that moment he pointed out to me that one glass was missing. . . . You remember, Jean?

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JEAN

That's a point I would n't venture to confirm. I didn't pay much attention to it and it has slipped from my memory. . . .

PIERRE

Oh, but yes, yes . . . you must remember, you even thrust a finger through the frame. . . .

JEAN

That's quite possible . . . but I don't see the importance of all this. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

You will see it very soon. . . . So it was about seven o'clock that you were at the Château d'Ypermonde? . . .

PIERRE

Perhaps a little later, perhaps a quarter

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or half past seven. . . . A man does n't always keep his watch in his hand. . . . The dinner was arranged for eight; we talked for a few minutes, and I had no more than just time to go home to dress. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

And between five o'clock and half-past seven where were you? . . .

PIERRE

I was at home.

THE MAGISTRATE

You were alone? . . .

PIERRE

Yes, my father and my sister were away; it was Sunday, and the servants were all out. As I was going down the

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steps of the house to visit Jean, my sister, who I had imagined was fifty kilometres away at the house of an uncle, suddenly turned up in a car; and without waiting a second to get rid of the dust of the journey she jumped out and went with me to the Château d'Ypermonde.

THE MAGISTRATE

Then it was seven o'clock when she arrived? . . .

PIERRE

As I have told you, seven or a quarter past. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

So that in case of need there is nobody who could be evidence that you were in your own house from five o'clock till a quarter past seven? . . .

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PIERRE

No, since there was n't anybody there. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

That is a point of the greatest importance to settle; for I must inform you, Monsieur Le Moyne, that there is a series of extremely awkward coincidences against you. . . .

PIERRE

[*Astounded and bewildered.*] A series of very unpleasant awkward coincidences? . . . What about? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

With regard to the presumed murder of Mathieu Meyer. . . .

PIERRE

Of Mathieu Meyer? . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

Yes, you were one of his most faithful clients, as it seems. . . .

PIERRE

Good heavens, I went to him now and then, just as many of the young men in my set do go. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

And the last time you went was when? . . .

PIERRE

The last time? Let me see! Oh, that was on Saturday, the fourteenth. I had something troubling me a good deal, and I needed to have a small sum of money on a hurry. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

And between the fourteenth and the

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fifteenth you never noticed that there was a lens missing out of your eyeglasses? . . .

PIERRE

I can't see that I must necessarily have lost it on the fourteenth. It can't have been missing for very long; for I use my glasses every minute. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

So you think that if you had lost it on the fourteenth, it is most unlikely that you would not have noticed the loss until the fifteenth at the very end of the day. . . .

PIERRE

It is altogether unlikely. . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

It would follow, then, that it is practi-

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cally certain that you went again to Meyer's house on the fifteenth in the late afternoon.

PIERRE

No, no, indeed; not at all. It is quite certain, on the contrary, that I did n't go there on the fifteenth, since I never left my own house. Why do you ask me this? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

Because this broken lens, which you have just recognised, was found on the carpet in Meyer's office. According to what you say yourself, it could not possibly have been there since the fourteenth, the day of your last visit to Meyer; it had, therefore, been there only a little while, otherwise you would have observed that it was missing; it was there perhaps

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only from that period of two hours, from five to seven, which you cannot account for; and, further, Meyer's office was in a state of disorder, there were traces of a struggle, so that from these circumstances to draw the inference. . . .

PIERRE

To draw the inference? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

That you are no stranger to the death of this man. . . .

PIERRE

Me! Come, come, this can't be seriously intended! Me? . . . Look here, have I got a murderer's face? To begin with, what interest had I in Meyer's death? It is n't for a few little paltry debts. . . . That does n't hold together for a moment! . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

Indeed it would not go on holding together if you were able to establish that you did not leave your own house between five and seven o'clock. Can you not do this? . . .

PIERRE

I have told you that I was alone in the house. . . . And yet I cannot establish that any one saw me, when there was nobody there to see me! . . . If I were to ask you, Monsieur le Juge, what you were doing on such and such a day at such and such a time, would you always have a witness under your hand to tell me: Monsieur le Juge was rolling cigarettes, smoking his pipe, or mixing himself a cocktail? . . . Once more, it can't be serious; this is n't the way a man is accused, and if you have no other proofs. . . .

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THE MAGISTRATE

Perhaps there will be others; I even hope to have one very soon that will be decisive. . . . Meyer possessed a large portfolio made of yellow leather that everybody knew, for he was never seen without this historic portfolio tucked closely under his right arm. In this portfolio, as we know from his son, who left him a little before five o'clock on the fifteenth, he had placed certain important documents that concerned Monseur d'Ypermonde, to whom he intended to pay a visit during the afternoon or the evening. Now in spite of all our searches this portfolio has not yet been found. The only thing left me, to make this part of my inquiry complete, is to carry out a formal search—and it gives me great regret to be obliged to do so—at the Château d'Ypermonde and at your house.

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JALLINE

[Growing pale and rising to her feet.]

A search in our house? . . .

THE MAGISTRATE

I regret it infinitely, mademoiselle; I know that a search is something very disagreeable. . . . However, it will be carried out with the utmost possible discretion, but it is absolutely unavoidable. . . .

PIERRE

Don't trouble, Jalline. . . . We have nothing to be afraid of. . . . Their search will come to nothing; it is certainly not in our house that they will find the portfolio. . . .

JALLINE

[Throwing herself into Pierre's arms and choking down her sobs.] Pierre, my poor Pierre. . . .

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PIERRE

Come now, Jalline, it's no matter; you know that very well. . . . It is n't serious. . . . If everything hangs on this portfolio, we may be quite at our ease.

[JALLINE looks fixedly at JEAN *without saying a word.* JEAN *looks at JALLINE and holds his tongue.*]

MAGISTRATE

[*Rising.*] Mademoiselle, messieurs, I am obliged to you. . . . I am about to give directions to carry out the necessary search, which, in accordance with the law, will take place in your presence. . . . In the meanwhile, would you be so good as to hold yourselves at the disposal of the law? . . .

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JEAN

[*Rising in his turn, pale and resolved.*]

I know where this portfolio is. . . .

MAGISTRATE

Where is it? . . .

JEAN

In Pierre Le Moyne's house. . . .

JALLINE

[*Fainting.*] Jean! . . .

MAGISTRATE

How do you know that? . . .

JEAN

I gave it myself to Mademoiselle Jalline after the accident that happened to the money-lender, who died in my house. . . .

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MAGISTRATE

So it was you who killed him, then? . . .

JEAN

I never laid a hand upon him. He died by an accident. But what it is sufficient, for the moment, to declare and proclaim, is the absolute innocence of Pierre. He is a complete stranger to this death; he had no part in it whatever, either near or far, direct or indirect; and it is I alone who must remain in your hands and at your disposal in order to explain what led up to the fatal accident of which I was the one and only witness. . . .

MAGISTRATE

If that is the case, Monsieur d'Ypermonde, I am obliged to take measures for the safe-keeping of your person, while I

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go and give an account of the results of my enquiry. . . .

[He makes a sign to one of the gendarmes, who drops a heavy hand on JEAN'S shoulder.]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Great Hall of the Château d'Ypermonde, in the same state as shown at the beginning of Act II. It is nine o'clock in the morning. JEAN, in evening-clothes, is still in the arm-chair where he fell asleep at the beginning of the Second Act. JACQUES, the old maître d'hôtel, is standing in front of him, and, after hesitating for a moment, puts a hand on his shoulder to wake him up.

JACQUES

Monsieur Jean! . . .

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JEAN

[*Still asleep.*] Sergeant, I am at your orders. . . .

JACQUES

[*Tapping him on the shoulder again.*]
Monsieur Jean! . . .

JEAN

[*Waking up with a start.*] Yes, yes,
I am coming with you. . . .

JACQUES

Monsieur Jean, it is nine o'clock, and I
have taken the liberty. . . .

[*Rubbing his eyes.*] And the magistrate,
the gendarmes? . . . Where are
they? . . .

JACQUES

The magistrate? The gendarmes?

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Monsieur Jean, I took the liberty of waking you, because Mademoiselle Jalline. . . .

JEAN

Is that you, Jacques? . . .

JACQUES

Certainly, Monsieur Jean. . . . You have slept well, sir?

JEAN

I have been asleep? . . .

JACQUES

Certainly, Monsieur Jean. . . . It is nine o'clock, and I should not have taken the liberty of waking you if Mademoiselle Jalline. . . .

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JEAN

I have been asleep here? . . .

JACQUES

We must suppose so, Monsieur Jean; for I found you just now in the same arm-chair as last night. . . .

JEAN

As last night? . . . What day is it? . . .

JACQUES

Monday, Monsieur Jean, to be sure. . . .

JEAN

What Monday? . . .

JACQUES

Monday, the day that comes after Sunday, to be sure, Monsieur Jean. . . .

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JEAN

But what 's the date? . . .

JACQUES

The sixteenth of May, Monsieur Jean. . . .

JEAN

I got here yesterday? . . .

JACQUES

Yes, Monsieur Jean, yesterday afternoon. . . .

JEAN

And nothing has happened? . . . I have n't gone out of doors; nobody has come here? . . .

JACQUES

Oh, yes. Monsieur Jean. . . . Made-

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moiselle Jalline came quite early, while you were asleep, and she told me I was not to wake you up. . . . Now she has come again; she is a little uneasy, and that is why I took the liberty. . . .

JEAN

Mademoiselle Jalline is here? . . .

JACQUES

Yes, sir, she is waiting in the small drawing-room. . . .

JEAN

[Springing up and running to the door on the right of the fireplace.] Jalline!
. . . Jalline! . . .

JALLINE

[Running to meet him.] Jean! . . .
Jean! . . .

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JEAN

[*Kissing her unrestrainedly.*] Oh, Jalline, my own Jalline! . . . It is really you! . . . There is no doubt about it! . . . I am like a drowned wretch who sees the sun shining again! . . . I must touch you; I must clasp you in my arms to be certain sure that you are really real and that you won't escape me! . . .

JALLINE

[*Rather uneasy.*] But what is the matter, Jean? . . . I have never seen you like this. . . .

JEAN

Oh, Jalline, my own Jalline! . . . If you only knew from what a hell you have rescued me! . . . If you knew what you did for me last night! . . .

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JALLINE

What I did for you last night? . . .

JEAN

Yes, yes, I know . . . you can't possibly tell. . . . But at last I have seen you as you really are! . . . I have seen all that you are! . . . I had never known you before! . . . But now I know, and I know for all the rest of time! . . . I have seen all that I was on the point of losing, and I see all that I have found again! . . . Oh, Jalline! my own Jalline! . . . I regret nothing! . . . There is only you in the world; there is nothing but you henceforth! . . . This is the way we human beings have to know one another to know what we really are! . . . It is the only way to see down to the foundations of a soul! . . . It was so beautiful that it called for tears. . . . You see I am still

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weeping from it! . . . And it was such a cruel test, between your brother and me. . . . You had to choose, everything was against me, and you never doubted! . . .

JALLINE

Jean, you are n't ill, are you? . . .

JEAN

Yes, I know, I am mixing everything up together! . . . You can't understand a word, and you must think I'm a trifle mad. . . . I don't know what I'm saying. . . . But don't be uneasy; I'll explain everything to you. . . . But I am so happy, too happy, my own Jalline; my head is still swimming; you must forgive me. . . . And now it's broad daylight! . . . All the windows are open, and they're not angry with me any longer,

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. . . The morning air and the sunlight are flooding in on every side! [*Pulling her over to the windows.*] Jacques, Jacques, open them all. . . . Jacques, Jacques, open everything!

[As a matter of fact, as soon as JEAN and JALLINE have joined each other, JACQUES has begun to open the big windows and push back the outside shutters; then, summoned by a bell ringing, he has gone out of the room and comes back a little later preceding MATHIEU MEYER, who stands waiting on the doorstep.]

JACQUES

Monsieur Jean, here is Monsieur Meyer. He insists so strongly on seeing you at once that I did not venture. . . .

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JEAN

[*Catching sight of Meyer.*] What, you? . . . You, too? . . . You here? You are still alive? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

[*Coming forward.*] Yes, of course, Monsieur Jean, and at your service. . . . As you see, we grow old, but we go on living all the same. . . .

JEAN

[*Shaking hands with him effusively.*] And you've got your portfolio! . . . Nothing happened to you last night! . . . Ah, well, now, I am so delighted, I must embrace him, too! . . . [*He embraces DADDY MEYER, who is completely taken aback, but does not lose his head and, in order to take advantage of his*

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client's good frame of mind, brings a sheaf of papers out of his portfolio.]

THE MONEY-LENDER

I heard of your return just by chance, Monsieur Jean, and I have taken advantage of the occasion to bring you your little accounts for you to look at and. . . .

JEAN

Yes, I know, we 'll talk about that another time. . . . What state are my affairs in? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

It is n't bad, Monsieur Jean; it is n't at all bad. . . .

JEAN

I know, I know, not bad for you; and when everything is settled up, there will even be a little surplus. . . .

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THE MONEY-LENDER

There will even be a considerable surplus, Monsieur Jean, a considerable surplus; only it will be necessary to. . . .

JEAN

I know, I know. . . . Have you the photograph and the will? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

[*In bewilderment.*] The photograph and the will? . . .

JEAN

Yes, my father's will? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

But I have never seen your respected father's will, Monsieur Jean. . . .

JEAN

[*Going to the safe hidden under the*

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tapestry.] Wait a moment! . . . [*He opens the safe and takes out certain documents.*] But it's in here! . . . They are here! . . . You are quite sure it is n't in your portfolio? . . . You'll allow me? . . . [*He opens the portfolio.*] No, indeed, it's not in here. . . . [*Taking another paper from the bottom of the safe.*] And this bill for twenty-five thousand francs drawn by me and accepted by you? . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

I have accepted a bill for twenty-five thousand francs drawn by you without fresh security? . . . On what date, Monsieur Jean? . . .

JEAN

On the thirtieth of April! . . . [*Examining the paper.*] But no, it's quite

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true, it does n't carry your signature. . . .
You are sure it is n't in your portfolio?

THE MONEY-LENDER

I am quite sure and certain that I have accepted no bill of yours for twenty-five thousand francs drawn on the thirtieth of April, Monsieur Jean; I had no further cover. . . . I might perhaps have done it, to do you a favour, only to do you a favour, Monsieur Jean, if you had given me fresh security. . . .

JEAN

But you said the signature was forged. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

What signature, Monsieur Jean? . . .

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JEAN

Yours. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Who would have been likely to imitate my signature, Monsieur Jean? . . .

JEAN

You said it was me. . . .

THE MONEY-LENDER

Oh! Monsieur Jean, I would never have taken such a liberty, and then, if I had such a document as that, Monsieur Jean. . . .

JEAN

Oh, I know, I know, I should never get away from it so cheaply as all that. . . . Well, it's no matter; you are an excellent fellow, and if you only knew how particularly obliged I am to you for being

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still in the land of the living, after what might have happened! . . . Would you kindly come back again to-morrow? . . . We shall settle our little business, and you won't lose anything; don't be the least bit afraid. . . . [THE MONEY-LENDER *goes out.*] To-day I am all wrapped up in the joy of being saved. . . . I can hardly believe it's real yet. . . . But where are Thécia, Tonia, little Linette and the old gardener? . . . Jacques, go along and call them! . . . I must see everybody to be sure that I'm not dreaming any longer! . . . Ah, my friends, if you only knew! . . . I must seem a bit mad to you, but it's too much for me! . . . I am just beginning to understand and to wake up in earnest. . . . Where is Pierre? . . . I must see him, too! . . .

JALLINE

He has been here already this morning

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with me, but you were still asleep. . . .
He won't be long. . . .

JEAN

Poor Pierre. . . . He was so nice and innocent and knew nothing at all about it. . . . [*Looking at the busts in the hall.*] And the others! . . . They are there, too . . . They have all come back never to leave me again! . . . Don't take any notice of me; I seem to be wandering. . . . I know what I'm saying, and you will understand in time. . . . I didn't understand, either, what they are in my heart of hearts, in my blood, in my soul, and in my whole real life, before what they did last night! . . . Never say again they are dead! . . . They live as much as ourselves, since they are alive in us as we are alive in and through them! . . .

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The good that we do; it is they alone who do it, and when we act otherwise than they would have us, it is only then that they die in our souls and abandon us for ever!

[Enter the two old women servants; then, a moment after, the old gardener holding by the hand little LINETTE, who is carrying a sheaf of lilies.]

Ah! Thécla! Tonia! . . . And you, too, Linette! . . . With lovely flowers! Where did you gather them? . . . They are the very flowers of last night! . . . For I was not there, but somehow, I can't tell how, I saw you on the bridge before the great door, when you were coming down again with your arms laden with the lilies they had given you, as though to prove to us that innocence has nothing to

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fear from them or from the world they live in! . . . Come, Linette, they gave them to you, and we shall give them back as tribute to them. . . . [*Drawing her in front of his father's statue.*] We will take them to the one who waked up all the others and rallied them around my conscience. . . . [*Drawing JALLINE along as well.*] Come you, too, my dear Jalline! . . . Bow before him; he is greater than we! One day you shall understand what I am about to say to him; and if I look like forgetting it, you must repeat it to me. My father, I was on the point of falling! the honour of your name, everything that I owe you, and everything I owe to those who have gone before us, had already tottered in my thought. You raised it erect once more before it was too late. My thanks to you for this; my thanks to them for it, too; and now I mean

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to do my duty, to carry on their work and to labour like them, so that I may deserve their favour and their approval.

[*Enter PIERRE. Jean runs to him and clasps him in his arms.*]

Ah! Pierre, my good Pierre! . . . I have dreamed the most dreadful dream. . . . But if Jalline is willing that I should enter on another, it will be the most beautiful one of my new life!

JALLINE

I am willing, my dear Jean. But I am the one who is dreaming at this moment what was the dream of happiness of all my childhood, of all my girlhood, of all my whole life! [*She throws herself weeping into JEAN'S arms.*]

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JEAN

[*Clasping her in turn in his arms.*]
All your whole life. I answer for it in
future, and I take to witness those who
never leave us!

CURTAIN

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Maeterlinck, Maurice

The Cloud that Lifted, and
The Power of the Dead.

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